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ABSTRACT

This issue of "Kansas English" focus on composition and language study, kindergarten through grade six. The articles and authors are "Evaluating Process and Product in Children's Writing" by Robert L. Hillerich, "Written Language Development and Instruction of Elementary School Children" by Lester S. Golub, "From a Reading Desk" by Myrline Winkler, "The Semi-Revolution in English" by Robert Grindell, and "From the State Specialist's Desk" by Lois Caffyn. (TO)

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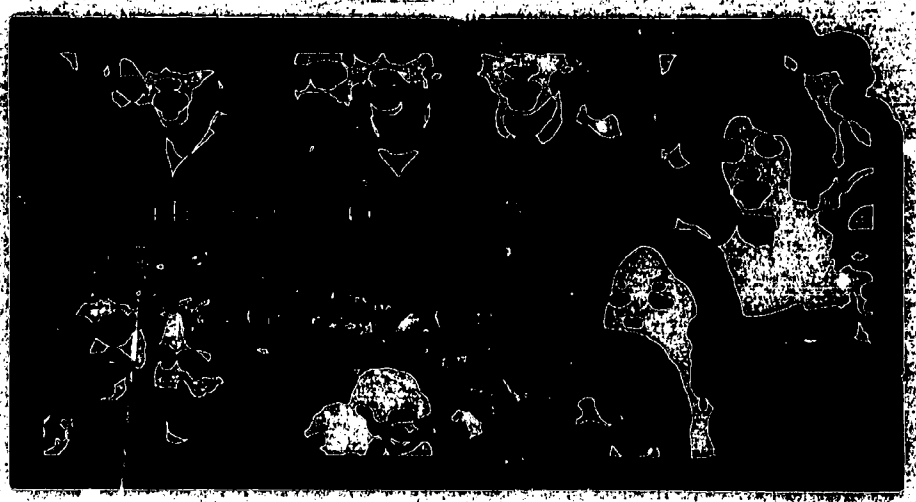
KANSAS ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

FOCUS: COMPOSITION AND LANGUAGE STUDY, K-6



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Evaluating Process and Product in Children's Writing

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Both process and product ought to be evaluated in the elementary program of written expression. Evaluation of the process would include the program and experiences provided; evaluation of the product would be expanded well beyond correctness to include clarity, style, fluency, and the effective domain.

Historically the job we have done has been poor. The focus has been on product only, and most often on only one aspect of that—correctness. The teacher of English, armed with a red pencil, was the self-appointed defender of the language. Small wonder that only a few graduates of this product-oriented schooling learned to enjoy writing in spite of the experience; a greater number were capable of writing correct inanities when they had to; and most were classed as unable to write a clearly organized paragraph.

Today there is hope that we are moving away from this single-minded emphasis on correctness, although there seems to be a large, invisible segment of our society that holds to the one standard. I say "invisible" because I can't find these people: elementary teachers want to free children to write, but they tell me that parents want marks for correctness; parents understand the importance of interest and ideas in written expression, but they are concerned about mechanics because of the high school; high school teachers would be happy to receive students who could write an organized paragraph, but they are concerned about college entrance exams. Try to find the invisible group! Even the lay panel reviewing the National Assessment Goals for Writing recognized the importance of goals other than correctness, but they insisted on adding the latter because they "were concerned about public reaction should the technical skills be overlooked." (National Assessment of Education Progress, 1972, p. 6)

It seems time to quit passing the buck and to stand up for what we know. While we rightly cry for more research dealing with the improvement of written expression, we already know more than we use. In fact, we have enough evidence to develop programs that are good for kids and that will do at least as well as—and often better than—we have done in the past; we have enough evidence about what the process should be that, if we use it, the product will likely take care of itself.

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Evaluating the Process

To establish what the process and program of written language should be, let's remove some of the vestiges of the past. The process for elementary children is not one of producing correct inanities; it is not one of getting back papers that drip blood from the red pencil; nor is it one of learning the grammar of the language. The process is one of helping children to become conscious of the intuitive knowledge of the language that they already possess and to enjoy the manipulation of that language on paper.

Most specifically, the teacher should evaluate process, first of all, by establishing appropriate criteria for writing and by letting the children in on her secret. This writer would suggest the following in order of priority:

1. Clarity—Did I say what I wanted to say? Unless this point is met, the exercise of writing is fruitless.
2. Interest Appeal—Did I say it in an interesting manner? If a writer hopes to be read, he should try; otherwise he has little reason to write.
3. Correctness—Did I say it correctly? Here, mechanics—other than those dealing with clarity—are put in their place: they are less educational concerns than social concerns, and as such, belong in the category with Amy Vanderbilt and Emily Post.

Having established priorities with the children, additional items of process are evident in the literature. Foremost is the evidence that experience in writing increases writing skill, whether process or product is evaluated.

Hillerich (1971a; 1971b) reported two studies involving over 3,000 children at primary and middle grades. The children had at least weekly experience in writing and the foregoing criteria were used with a minimum of emphasis on mechanics. Not only did the children improve in the sophistication with which they wrote (length of T-unit, subordination, etc.) but they also improved in the traditional mechanics of capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.

Nikoloff (1965) reported similar results in a study of 100 teachers at grades five and six. The teachers were divided into two groups, "high standard" (emphasizing mechanics) and "low standard" (emphasizing ideas). In this study, the children of "low standard" teachers wrote more words, had more ideas and more original ideas, and made *fewer* mechanical errors.

Taylor and Hoedt (1966) demonstrated the effect of praise without correction as opposed to criticism with correction. With 105 fifth graders, the authors found no significant difference in the writing skill of the two treatment groups, but they did find that the "uncorrected" group wrote more and had a better attitude about writing. Gee (1972) found essentially the same results with eleventh graders.

Burton and Arnold (1963) also found, at the high school level, that

frequent practice *alone* resulted in improved writing.

In this process orientation, ideas for stimulating the writing of children become important. Fortunately, we are surrounded by the written word; one has only to look to see ideas that can be used. I have developed a list of over 50, using everything from some of the columns of Syd Harris to the cartoon "Tumbleweeds." For those who prefer more organized suggestions, there is *Wishes, Lies and Dreams* (Koch, 1970), *The Whole Word Catalog* (Teachers and Writers Collaborative, 1972), or *Sparkling Words* (Carlson, 1973).

In English, some teachers are not satisfied with stimulating, motivating, and freeing children to express themselves in writing. For those who *must teach*, the work of O'Hare (1973) and the research of Odegaard and May (1972) suggest that flexibility in the use of language can be learned through structured experiences. (I'm not even sure this can be "taught," but it can be "learned.")

The process of written language must involve all aspects of language. While we can't quote supporting research, our desire to develop interest and enjoyment in writing would lead to language logs, where each child would collect items of interest to him—items ranging from sensory words to vivid descriptions and including everything from acronyms to palindromes.

Strong research support is also lacking in revision. However, the gradual introduction of this experience, after children have been freed to write, can provide enjoyable manipulation of language as children try to increase clarity or interest appeal.

Even the area of "correctness" need not be omitted from the process of written expression. While admonishing children to proofread is a worthless—if not mind-dulling—practice, evidence from a few short-terms studies (Personke and Knight, 1967; Frasch, 1965; Oswalt, 1961) suggests that the specific teaching of proofreading results in improved ability in that area.

If I were evaluating a program in written expression and found the process to be somewhat like that outlined above, I would have no further concerns. In other words, the evidence is strong enough that, with the appropriate process, the product should take care of itself. On the other hand, for ye of little faith, some current techniques for evaluating product follow.

Evaluating the Product

As stated, traditionally teachers were concerend with marking—if not counting up—the mechanical errors in a piece of writing. The more "enlightened" then began adding a second grade for ideas.

Our aspirations for children in written expression ought to be well beyond simple mechanics, beyond the writing of correct drivel, beyond the use of short simple sentences *merely* because they are easier to punctuate, and

beyond the use of the more common—and often less appropriate word—merely because its spelling is known. If higher goals are accepted, then the simple measure of correctness is unfitting.

The loftier goals of clarity and interest imply the desire to develop more sophistication in the use of language in writing. These higher goals demand evaluation procedures beyond the counting of errors.

Some of the procedures suggested in the literature are too time-consuming to be practical on a day-to-day basis. For example, Carlson (1973) offers a convolution of quantified subjective judgments: she suggests evaluation, on a five-point scale, of thirty-six separate items.

To use the variety of checks reported by researchers such as Loban (1963), Hunt (1965) or O'Donnell et al (1967) is beyond the time and linguistic sophistication of most elementary teachers. On the other hand, the length of T-unit is as easy to check as mechanical errors, and this factor has been identified in the latter two studies as a good measure of language development.

At the primary level, at least, fluency alone seems to be a good indicator of development in written language. The measure of fluency is nothing more than a count of total words written in a specified time. While O'Donnell (1967) is not enthusiastic about this measure, his results indicate a clear progression from grade to grade.

Hillerich (1971b) established norms for 1,500 primary grade children on the basis of the number of words written in a fixed time to a given picture stimulus. After a year of increased emphasis on extensive writing, freeing the children to write, all primary children were given the same writing test and their themes evaluated for fluency and checked against the previous year's norms. The investigator found the average fluency of first grade at fifty-seventh percentile of the previous year; second grade average, at the sixty-sixth percentile; and third grade average, at the seventy-fourth percentile of the previous year.

From elementary through high school the complaint is heard that there is insufficient time to evaluate writing if children write too frequently. It seems to me that every piece of writing need not—in fact, should not—be evaluated or even read by the teacher. Somehow the act of evaluation must be removed from the area of day-to-day counting; no one improves or regresses measurably in writing in a day—or in a week for that matter. On the short-term basis, whatever reaction there is to children's writing ought to be reaction as communication to communication. Evaluation is a matter of sampling each month or two to appraise growth through a comparison of samples from a given child.

If evaluation is accepted as a spaced sampling, then there is time for children to write daily, and there is time for the teacher to evaluate with the child monthly or so for clarity, for interest appeal, and for increased fluency, length of T-unit, or even for the more sophisticated elements. At least, in evaluating product, let's put the focus on the positive measures we're trying to increase, not on the negative counting of errors. For one thing, the latter will discourage longer or more involved writing. For example, Hillerich (1971b) found that children made exactly twice as many mechanical errors on the second and following pages of a piece of writing as they did on the first page.

Summary

This paper has been an attempt to order the priorities in written language. It suggests that evaluation of the process of writing presented to children is just as important—if not more important—than evaluation of the product written by children.

Process evaluation was viewed here as the assessment of the teacher's role in the development of skill and interest in written expression. Process evaluation might inlude such questions as:

—Does the teacher stimulate and provide time for a variety of opportunities to use language in writing?

—Does the teacher stimulate interest in the written expression of others?

—Does the teacher keep the primary focus on the clarity and interest appeal of children's writing?

Process evaluation was viewed here as the assessment of the teacher's role in the development of skill and interest in written expression. Process evaluation might include such questions as:

—Does the child show growth in language sophistication as evidenced by word choice, length of T-unit, subordination, etc.?

If children are writing more but enjoying it less, better take another look at the process!

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Written Language Development and Instruction of Elementary School Children

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Writing is thinking written down. For all age groups this is a basic definition of written language. A child's purpose in writing, as well as an adult's, is to communicate an idea. As a child's language and thought develop, he will want to shape his written ideas using rhetorical and figurative devices.

Writing is connected to reading and speaking in inseparable ways. Writing reflects a child's total language and thought development. Reading is "decoding," as is listening. Thought is needed for deriving meaning in both the reading and the writing operation. In writing, the writer, through his inner voice, controls and shapes thought. In reading, the author, an outside agent, controls and shapes thought. Although the speaking, listening and reading language functions are extremely complex human behaviors, writing tops them as complex human behavior.

Are Children Learning the Language Arts Concepts That Are Taught?

In a study to determine how well children were learning the concepts teachers claimed they were teaching to improve the written language of students, it was discovered that children were not learning these concepts very well (Golub, Fredrick, and Harris, 1971). The primary objectives of this research were: 1) to identify basic concepts in the English language arts appropriate to and generally taught at the intermediate grade levels, 2) to identify criterion tasks for measuring concept attainment abilities in the English language arts, 3) to develop test items for criterion tasks to measure achievement of these language arts concepts, and 4) to determine how well boys and girls perform on these language arts test items.

In identifying the concepts for testing, the domain of concepts consisted of all those single words or phrases which seemed to be classificatory and which were treated in some way in the English language arts curriculum. Six current textbook series were searched and all classificatory concepts in the body or in the index of these textbooks were recorded. This huge number of concepts was analyzed, and three areas which seemed to contain the majority of concepts were chosen: 1) *Words*, 2) *Words in Sentences*, and 3) *Connected Discourse*. *Words* contained concepts related to letters, letter sounds, word parts, word types, and word meanings. *Words in Sentences* contained concepts

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related to parts of speech, sentence punctuation, types of sentences, and word functions.

Connected Discourse contained concepts related to paragraph, sentence functions, and letter writing. Teachers were then asked to indicate if they taught the concept in fourth grade, if 80-90% of the pupils knew the definition of the concept and were able to pronounce the concept word or phrase. As a result of this information, thirty English language arts concepts were selected for analysis and testing:

1

I. Words	II. Words in Sentences	III. Connected Discourse
1. Abbreviations	11. Adjectives	21. Comparison
2. Compound Word	12. Helping Verb	22. Details
3. Consonant	13. Period	23. Explanation
4. Contraction	14. Possessive Noun	24. Greeting
5. Homonym	15. Predicate	25. Heading
6. Short Vowel	16. Present Tense	26. Paragraph
7. Silent Letter	17. Pronoun	27. Return Address
8. Suffix	18. Question Mark	28. Thank You Letter
9. Synonym	19. Sentence	29. Title
10. Word	20. Verb	30. Topic Sentence

The twelve criterion tasks for each concept were:

1. Given name of attribute, select example.
2. Given example of attribute, select name.
3. Given name of concept, select example.
4. Given name of concept, select nonexample.
5. Given example of concept, select name.
6. Given concept, select relevant attribute.
7. Given concept, select irrelevant attribute.
8. Given definition of concept, select name.
9. Given name of concept, select definition.
10. Given concept, select supraordinate concept.
11. Given concept, select subordinate concept.
12. Given two concepts, select relationship.

A total of 355 English language arts items were developed for the purpose of measuring and assessing children's concept attainment of the language arts concepts taught by teachers at the fourth grade. However, pilot studies indicated that the selected language arts concepts were very difficult for fourth graders. The subjects finally tested were 186 boys and 259 girls just beginning the sixth grade in the public school system of Madison, Wisconsin.

The final results indicate that the most difficult concepts tested are Adjective, Helping Verb, Predicate, and Topic Sentence. The easiest concepts tested are Question Mark, Thank You Letter, Silent Letter, and Sentence. The final results show that the easiest concepts for girls are not necessarily the easiest for boys. The average difference between boys and girls is about one half of a standard deviation, with the girls ahead.

The concepts dealing with Area I, *Words*, concepts 1-10, are the easiest for intermediate grade children. The easiest concepts for boys are Consonant, Short Vowel, and Silent Letter; the most difficult for boys are Suffix and Synonym.

The concepts dealing with Area II, *Words in Sentences*, concepts 11-20, are the most difficult for boys and girls. The most difficult concepts in this group are Adjective, Helping Verb, Predicate, Possessive Noun, and Pronoun; the easiest are Period and Question Mark.

The concepts dealing with Area III, *Connected Discourse*, concepts 21-30, represent middle-difficulty concepts. The most difficult are Heading and Topic Sentence; the easiest are Thank You Letter and Title. In not one of the thirty concepts was a mean score obtained which would indicate a 75% or above criterion level of concept attainment. For the girls, at least eight concepts (mean 8.5 or above) meet the 75% or above criterion level of concept attainment.

The final results indicate that neither boys nor girls attain 75% level of task attainment for all thirty of the concepts. The easiest task, Task 1, given the name of an attribute, select an example, barely meets the .75 criterion level for girls only.

A factor analysis of the intercorrelation of the thirty concepts and the intercorrelation of the 12 tasks indicates that there is a common factor for all thirty concepts and a common factor for all twelve tasks. This tends to indicate that there are at least two components of linguistic competence, one component being a child's *Linguistic Awareness*, LA, learned either intuitively or through instruction; the other component, the child's *Language Processing Ability*, LPA, his thought processes available for thinking about language.

Children's Written Language Development

Chomsky (1965) has suggested that there is a difference in linguistic performance and linguistic competence. In an educational context, performance can be described as what the teacher hears or sees of the child's language; competence can be described as the child's ability to manipulate and derive meaning from the structure of the language, a sort of linguistic ability or linguistic awareness which a child possesses.

Language competence is difficult to measure. Although we will probably

never know precisely the components of language competence, we can now make some inferences concerning a child's language ability. The Linguistic Ability Test, LAT, (Fredrick, Golub, and Johnson, 1970) is a carefully designed and successful measurement instrument with a Hoyt reliability of .95 and a validity score of .75 when correlated against teacher ratings of the children s writing ability. The LAT will give an indication of language ability variables in the following areas:

1. Ability to derive meaning from syntax
2. Ability to distinguish probable from improbable English grapheme clusters
3. Ability to determine pronoun referents
4. Ability to recognize words in the child's lexicon, given a clue from predictable phoneme-grapheme correspondences
5. Ability to transform an English sentence to a synonomous sentence by changing the structure but not the content
6. Ability to recognize morphemes as roots, prefixes, and suffixes
7. Ability to recognize form-class and function positions in a sentence
8. Ability to use the deletion transformation
9. Ability to recognize phoneme equivalents of various English graphemes and grapheme clusters
10. Ability to recognize the structure of various question transformations in order to produce the appropriate response structure
11. Ability to recognize logical meaning relationships between elements of a sentence
12. Ability to transform a verb phrase

The LAT is a paper and pencil test designed specifically to test the psycholinguistic ability of intermediate grade children. The directions and the test items are on tape and are read to the children while they follow along on the printed page. The taped reading of the test eliminates the question of reading difficulty which some children would naturally bring to the test.

Past attempts have been made at quantifying and describing children's written and spoken language performance. Children's oral discourse must be transcribed into a written form before it can be tabulated. As a result of studies in children's syntax (Golub and Fredrick, 1971), the author has derived a Syntactic Density Score which can be used to determine the syntactic density of written materials from Grades 1-14. A computer program is also available for this tabulation which is as reliable as hand tabulation.

The Syntactic Density Score which measures language performance consists of the following variables:

1. Total number of words
2. Total number of T-units

3. Words/T-unit
4. Subordinate clauses per T-unit
5. Mean main clause length
6. Mean subordinate clause length
7. Number of modals in the auxiliary
8. Number of *be* and *have* forms in the auxiliary
9. Number of prepositional phrases
10. Number of possessive nouns and pronouns
11. Number of adverbs of time

All eleven of these variables significantly distinguish good from poor discourse as rated by teachers.

Using the two scores, the LAT scores as a linguistic ability (awareness) measure and the Syntactic Density Score as a language performance measure, the author compared the written discourse of black, white, Indian, and Spanish-American intermediate grade children, (Golub, 1973). The results of this research are striking for educators interested in children's written language development.

Given the conditions of gathering samples of the children's written discourse, there were no significant differences between the four ethnic groups in syntactic density scores. In other words, in the measure of linguistic performance, black, white, Indian and Spanish-American children from similar socioeconomic backgrounds write equally well. After four to six years in school, these children had learned equally well to produce written language with manageable, understandable, and logical syntactic forms. There were, however, significant differences between the four ethnic groups in language awareness as measured by the Linguistic Abilities Test. The black, Indian, and Spanish-American children were similar but significantly different from the white children. This research indicates that teachers can expect the following linguistic awareness differences among the four ethnic groups.

1. The Spanish-American child will be at a disadvantage in gaining the meaning of a word or phrase from its context, syntactic position or syntactic marker.
2. The black child will use a different set of rules for agreement of pronouns and their referents.
3. Both the black and the Indian child will have a problem of inferring the pronunciation of a word they can say from its graphemic representation on the printed page, or doing the opposite, inferring a logical spelling of a word from its pronunciation.
4. The black child will have different transformations for deriving synonomous sentences.

5. The Black child will use standard morpheme affixes differently from the white child.
6. The Black child will use deletion, question, and verb phrase transformations in ways different from the white child.
7. The Black child will recognize patterns of logical meaning relationships between syntactic elements of a sentence.

Rather than looking at syntactic density and expression of ideas in children's writing, teachers are more inclined to focus on deviations or errors in children's written papers. In a study in linguistic deviations in children's writing, (Golub and Fredrick, 1970), this author found that when the number of deviations, both lexical and syntactic, in each theme was tabulated and the theme quality determined by experienced teachers, the correlation coefficient between these two measures was .25. However, when deviations per number of words was computed and the correlation coefficient between these and theme quality was obtained, the relationship proved significant ($r=.64$; $p < .001$). This statistic indicates that an aspect of theme quality is the number of deviations per amount written. As the density of deviations per words decreases, the quality of children's written discourse is judged better by their teachers. This same research also points to the language needs of children considering the lexical and syntactic deviations found in their written sentences. Of the 1,685 syntactic deviations found in a corpus of 20,000 words of intermediate grade children's writing, only twenty-four linguistic concepts were involved. This seems to indicate that teachers might teach these twenty-four linguistic concepts for correctness in writing rather than the whole universe of possible written language deviations as presented in most English language arts textbooks written for children—especially since children do not seem to be learning what is in these textbooks anyway.

In analyzing the lexical deviations of intermediate grade children, the author found that many of these lexical deviations are the result of problems of vocabulary development and word selection rather than spelling. Only half of the 1001 lexical deviations out of a 20,000 word corpus could be attributed to spelling. Of these spelling deviations, many result from omission, addition, or substitution of a single letter. The children know how to "spell," though it may not be the way their teachers and parents would wish them to spell. The list of scrambled letters and unknown words is small: less than 100 such errors in 20,000 words.

Lexical deviations can be placed in as few convenient categories as could the syntactic deviations. The existence of meaningful categories suggest that both lexical and syntactic written language deviations are susceptible to a cognitive learning approach rather than a rote-memory approach.

In a study on stimulating and receiving children's writing (Golub, 1971),

this author has attempted to trace the cognitive development of children as it is displayed through their written language. In discarding the mechanical and grammatical dictates of the language arts texts, the teacher is faced with a nine through twelve year old child who has learned to read some simple and not-so-simple prose, who has learned to manipulate the pencil at an excruciatingly slow rate, and who has thoughts in his mind which he wants to express in writing and aloud with other children.

Writing is a growth process. Although most children, who are native speakers of English upon entering school, know the rules of an introductory transformational grammar, they have no explicit grammatical or rhetorical knowledge. This preschool linguistic genius communicates like a child. He has difficulty relying exclusively on language; he will show egocentrism by using terms and experiences not shared by the listener; and he will fail to use contrasts so that the listener can associate similarities and differences, thus assuming that the listener knows more about the subject than he actually does.

In asking a nine year old child to write a story he has heard, the teacher must be aware of the child's ability to order information so that the reader has consecutive information at each point of the narration; of the child's ability to embed sentences to convey likely figure-ground relationships; of the child's logical conjoining of words and sentences; of the child's ability to shift styles depending upon his intended reader, and of the child's ability to use metaphors to capture similarities and differences in a situation. None of these abilities are dependent upon grammatical knowledge and none are well developed in children or in adolescents.

In spite of all we know about the structure of English, there is very little we can do to make a child write like an adult, a first grader like a fourth grader, a seventh grader like a twelfth grader, or a twelfth grader like a professional contributor to *Atlantic* or *Harpers*. Yet children who are learning to read must simultaneously be learning to write. In the classroom, stimuli for eliciting children's writing should permit the child and the teacher to become aware of the linguistic and rhetorical problems in writing. The quasi-linguistic problems such as spelling, capitalization, and punctuation, so apparent to an adult in examining children's writing, should be deemphasized. The teacher should attend to the child's linguistic and rhetorical development which is as inevitable as a child's physical development. The teacher must learn to "receive" children's writing so that the teacher accepts the child's message without criticizing the language of the message. The teacher must then respond to the message in such a way that his response suggests a stimulus to which the child can once again respond in either the oral or the written mode.

In the first and second grades, children display good kernel sentence sense in their writing. Not all children place these kernels in a logical order.

The second grader can pack more information into each writing sample than can a first grader. The problem of egocentrism is evident in the first and second grades where the world of experience is translated through the child's feelings. By the third grade, the child is writing in cursive and using coordination and subordination to express relationships. His egocentrism appears more appropriate to the subject. The child will start to express his value system which may clash with the value system of the teacher. In grade three, the child starts to think more independently.

By the fourth grade the child writer can grasp a sense of audience and start to express his own voice. Time sequences become better defined as the child learns to control grammatical past and present tense, futurity, conditionality, progressive and perfect aspect. At this level, the child makes a real effort to control and order the sequence of events.

An important change happens between the fourth and fifth grade in the development of the child's thought and language process. There is a complexity of events in the child's expression which is also obvious in his complex sentence structure. At this level, the need for the skillful use of coordination and subordination becomes apparent for expressing casual relationships and contrastive, depth-of-field relationships. The child at this level will attempt to recreate a world of vicarious experience.

The language and thought development between fifth and sixth graders is not so striking as between fourth and fifth graders. The sixth grader shows definite signs of creativity defined as imaginative and different. The creativity is not bizarre writing but an expression of the child's sincere individuality, his ability to order his perceptions and language, his ability to obtain psychological depth-of-field to show contrasts and similarities, and his ability to test hypotheses and to reach generalizations which must also be tested.

Written Language Instruction in the Elemetary Schools

Practices which seem to pay off in the teaching of written language in the elementary school classroom are those practices which involve the student immediately with a stimulus for thought, some time to think quietly or aloud to another student about the stimulus, followed by time to write, followed by time to read and to evaluate aloud to peers what has been written. The teaching of writing in the elementary school classroom, then, must involve: 1) stimulus for thought, 2) oral language, 3) written language, 4) reading, 5) another person's response to the message, and 6) repetition of the cycle. It is interesting to note that the work habits of important writers seem to reflect this same pattern. Henry James, for example, seldom wrote a word with pen or pencil, but rather spoke aloud to his amanuensis who typed the author's words directly on the Remington. The novelist would then reread to himself

and others, revise, and evaluate his craft before sending it to the publishers. Any writing program which does not include these sequential steps would, indeed, be an unnatural program.

This author has described such a program in detail (Golub, 1970a) and has shown that students who participate in such a program will produce more grade increase at the .01 level of significance than children who do not undergo such a program.

In "Teaching Literature as Language," (Golub, 1970b) this author has discussed the use of literature, particularly black-American and African literature in the classroom for eliciting structured responses to the literature. The language games and activities initiated from the literary selections are the following:

1. Repetition games
   Repetition of sounds, words, lines after the teacher
2. Substitution games
   Substitution of vocabulary within form-class slots
3. Expansion games
   Expansion in the verb string, verb phrase, or noun phrase
4. Structure games
   Using a variety of morphemic and syntactic structures within a sentence, changing only one structure at a time
5. Transformation games
   a. Single-base transformation starting with a declarative sentence and going to emphatic, question, negative, imperative, expletive, and passive
   b. Double-base transformations; additions of kernels in subordinate and coordinate contrasts

These techniques are based upon techniques used in second language learning as well as the tradition of altering the narrative or poetic word in oral cultures such as the African tribal languages.

In eliciting children's writing under different stimulus conditions, (Golub and Fredrick, 1970a), these authors concluded that the instructions to the students were not effective in causing any major changes in the quantity or complexity of children's writing. The effect of using color vs black-and-white pictures for the stimulus was significant for a number of linguistic variables. Several kinds of linguistic structures appeared more often in themes written in response to black-and-white pictures. For example, black-and-white pictures produced more clauses, especially subordinate noun and adverb clauses, more types of sentence patterns, more clauses per T-units, more multi-clause T-units, more single-base transformations, more modals, more adverbs, especially adverbs of time, and more prefixes than did color pictures. The color

pictures, however, brought more adjectives, more participial phrases, and slightly longer clauses. The response to black and white pictures appeared to be in terms of more complexity and more diversity of structure; the color pictures, more the result of description.

The children [illegible] more difficult to write about [illegible]. More fragments and false sentence starts occurred and [illegible] writing a list of nouns, calculating [illegible] rather than writing *about* the pictures. The concrete pictures produced more adverbial clauses and adverbial modifiers than the abstract pictures. Such adverbial modification was indicative of the larger amount of story telling and explanation produced from the concrete pictures.

The black and white pictures produced better teacher rated themes than the abstract pictures, but, again, not at a statistically significant figure. The themes written by girls were rated significantly higher by teachers than the themes written by boys ($p < .01$). In "Language Awareness as Thought Process" (Golub, 1974a) the author discusses the correlation of language development and thought in the elementary school child as outlined by Piaget and Inhelder (1969) and Vygotsky (1962). The author shows how, starting with the fourth or fifth grade the child can learn and display his grasp of the attributes of certain language concepts so as to expand his language awareness and thought processes. The schema proposed for learning about a language concept is 1) area of focus, 2) concept name, 3) definition, 4) supraordinate concept, 5) ordinate concept, 6) subordinate concept, 7) example, 8) non-example, 9) relevant attribute, 10) irrelevant attribute, and 11) principle. In order to go through the schema, the child and the teacher must have a "content-specific" vocabulary which permits them to discuss the concepts involved. By arranging the kinds of thought process activities in progressive order, it is possible to develop language awareness in elementary school children which they can bring to their writing experiences.

Needed Research in Written Language Development and Instruction of Elementary School Children

1. A computerized syntactic density score (SDS) which will give teachers and researchers an immediate reading of a child's language development in relation to his peers.
2. A computerized vocabulary frequency index (VFI) to be used along with the syntactic density score.
3. A way of correlating the SDS and VFI of a child's writing with his reading materials.

4. A language learning program in the elementary schools which incorporates reading with oral and written language development so that new language goals are set for the child as he progresses from level to level of the school curriculum. Such a program should prepare the child for the writing needs of the secondary school but need not contain the same objectives.
5. A clearer definition to the uses of oral and written language in the "real" world of the child as he progresses from elementary, secondary, college, to the world of work.
6. An analysis of caste and class distinctions conveyed through written language.
7. Methods of individualizing written language instructions to meet the needs of varying written language abilities.
8. Performance criteria and objectives to measure language and thought development of elementary school children.

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From A Reading Desk

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Let Children Write, by Margaret Langdon, tells the story of how a teacher, bored with the dullness of one student's essay after another, finds a way to break through the mediocrity and stiltedness, and is able to show her students how they can use the medium of writing with joy to express their feelings.

Mrs. Langdon, teaching at a village school in England, worked with children of varying abilities. She was impressed with the way they bubbled over with language in their conversation, and disheartened by the way their expression came across in their writing.

Thinking that the problem was in the writing, Mrs. Langdon tried lessons in oral language and oral expression. The results were similar to that of the writing: stiff, uninspired, unimaginative.

At this point, Mrs. Langdon realized that she had to find a new way. It must be a way of writing which expressed emotion, but it couldn't be poetry. The children would have nothing to do with poetry. Other criteria were brevity and simplicity. Children must be able to write without feeling they had to stretch a point on and on two hundred and fifty words or two pages, exactly.

With the above criteria in mind, Margaret Langdon waited for just the right moment to begin her experiment with intensive writing. The day came on April Fools Day! Suddenly, she surprised her class with:

'Look. There's a spider on the wall, a huge one.
Quick—write down the first thing which comes into your head about it. Now—as quickly as you can.'

'Make it brief and snappy—don't stop to think; just write what you feel,'

'Start on the next line, and say something about its body. Describe it as you see it.'

'Another new line and write three adjectives about its legs.'

'Now write of its web. Do you see any contrast between the spider and the web? Now round it off with a final sentence.'

This was the beginning. The results were beautiful. Several of the stories of the spider on the wall are quoted in the text.

This first try led to other experiences with intensive writing. The method continued to work, as long as the experiences were first hand and touched the children in an emotional way.

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Even the slower children and those who lacked confidence found success in intensive writing. The realization that their ideas were worth writing down gave them a new self esteem. Spelling and grammar seemed to come easier when the mind was focused on the finished creation rather than on the mechanics of writing.

Proof of the success of intensive writing, came several months after the first experiments. The children began to write intensively of their own accord. A bad storm was the stimulus for one, a venomous snake for another, and soon they were writing intensively whenever they felt the need for it. Writing had become, as art is, a way of expressing feelings.

Let the Children Write is a very appealing little book. It is written in the same style which the author encourages in her students. It is done with feeling and simplicity.

Adding to the delight of the book are the expressive illustrations. These are done by Margaret Langdon herself, and accompany many of the examples of children's writing.

If I were to try intensive writing in summing up how I feel about *Let the Children Write*, I think I would say:

Beautiful!
We can let the children write.
Here's how
At last!

The Semi-Revolution in English

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Its arrival was announced by publications bearing such titles as "Revolution in Grammar" (W. Nelson Francis, *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*, October 1954) and *Linguistics: A Revolution in Teaching* (Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner, 1966). With remarkable rapidity, the newest advances—first in structural linguistics, then in generative-transformational grammar—were translated into textbooks for school use, and crash programs to retrain English teachers, including federally-funded summer institutes, sprang up across the country. For over a decade there was turmoil, Now, in a time for taking stock, one aspect of the change is obvious. The old prescriptive school grammar, its absurdities exposed, has been largely replaced by the newer grammars based on structural and generative principles. Once-novel devices and terms—phonemes and distinctive features, tree diagrams and deep structures—are now routine fare in English classrooms.

Yet, while English in many quarters has been given a revolutionary new look, the current post-revolutionary stock-taking is yielding some disillusionment. Teachers are evidently becoming disenchanted with the new English, and not without reason. High hopes for it have been disappointed. While generative-transformational grammar may be more logical and coherent than traditional grammar, it is also more complicated. Many of the formulations seem mathematically abstract, not the sort of humanistically enriching material most English teachers had in mind when they chose their field. And what does the new grammar accomplish? Most students write as uncertainly as ever, making the same kinds of mistakes as students have always done. In fact, studies testing the effect of an individual's grammatical expertise on his writing skill continue to be inconclusive, as such studies have always been. "The more things change," as the revolution-weary French say, "the more they remain the same." Disillusioned with the new grammar, and no longer able to respect the old, many teachers seem ready simply to turn away from grammar entirely. For them, the dramatic new truth emerging from the revolution in English is that grammar may not be worth teaching at all.

Before going further, I wish to make clear my own stand. An analysis or description of a language that seems complicated, abstract, and pointless is naturally repellent. At the same time, the nature and working of our language—the medium through which we order and interpret our universe, the structure in which we think, remember, and hope—are inherently fascinating subjects. Our language is, after all, that element of our environment

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with which we are most intimately connected. It is also a reflection of the structure of our brains. It is, moreover, what preeminently distinguishes us from all other creatures, what makes us human. More relevant to our understanding of our environment than other branches of science, more strictly humanistic than other kinds of history, the study of language came to be the most essential of the liberal arts.

This being so, it is surely unsuitable and inappropriate to teach and study our language for its own sake, as science and history are taught and studied, with no practical purpose in view. Yet this motive, or lack of utilitarian motive, can seem strange when applied to language because we have such a long-standing and deeply ingrained habit of studying it for the good it's supposed to do us. The eighteenth-century Bishop of London, Robert Lowth, helped to establish the habit through his very influential *Short Introduction to English Grammar*, published in 1762. "The principal design of a Grammar of any Language," wrote Lowth, "is to teach us to express ourselves with propriety in that Language, and to be able to judge of every phrase and form of construction, whether it be right or not." Although Lowth's basic assumptions about English grammar and his method of discovering it are rejected by practically everyone nowadays, his belief in the utility of grammar study—the practical good it does, improving language skills and correctness—still underlies a great deal of the work with language in our schools. And when language study is directed toward such behavioral objectives, its character as one of the liberal arts is lost.

What has happened to English grammar in the schools is that it has been transformed, but incompletely so, by the recent "revolution." The old, dogmatic, prescriptive grammar which came down to us from Lowth's day may have been largely superseded, but the point of the old grammar remains. Principles and devices of structural and generative grammar may have been adopted, but not often in their own spirit. Paul Roberts, the most prominent of the textbook authors bringing the new grammar into the schools, declared in 1954: "My feeling is that the premises and procedures of linguistic science are clearly right and true, and in so far as I could I have used those premises and procedures in explaining the traditional terms and categories" (*Understanding Grammar*, p. xvi). That statement illustrates the halfway nature of the change, the new content being grasped from the old viewpoint, assimilated into the old attitudinal framework. This is not only unfortunate but also rather remarkable, because the spirit and purpose of both structural linguistics and generative grammar can hardly be adopted to the traditional objectives of English language study in the schools. Is it no wonder if the new grammar, made to serve the old purposes (or at least made to look as if it is serving those purposes), seems pointless. In that setting it is.

K.A.T.E.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Let's take an example from structural linguistics. This approach to language was first developed as a branch of anthropology for the purpose of decoding certain unwritten native tongues with accuracy and efficiency. Techniques were devised which yielded first an inventory of the sound-signals or phonology of the language, then the ways in which the sound-signals combine to form small units called morphemes, and the patterns in which the small units are strung together to form sentences. These techniques are based on several key insights into the nature and structure of all natural languages, including the concept of the phoneme and that of the morpheme. When in due course the methods of structural linguistics were applied to English, the purpose was not, of course, to decode our own language but rather to gain a full and accurate picture of its nature and structure. A true description of our language can give us, among other things, information about ourselves, about our way of organizing certain matters.

Any description of English will include, for example, an account of the way we make the past tense forms of regular verbs such as *want*, *flood*, *pass*, and *pour*. Traditional school grammar, which is writing-oriented, might simply note that the "ed" ending is added to these verbs to form the past tense. Structural grammar, more concerned with speech as the primary form of language, observes that there are actually three versions of the suffix: syllabic /ed/ for verbs like *want* and *flood*, /t/ for verbs like *pass*, and /d/ for verbs like *pour*. Half a dozen or more implications may follow from the structural observation.

First among these implications is the understanding that there is a principle at work. The existence and distribution of the three suffix forms is not an arbitrary or inexplicable matter, but an instance of the general and easily understood principle of assimilation. By this principle, a speech sound may be altered when it is in proximity with another speech sound so that it becomes more similar to it in some respect. The consonants /t/ and /d/ are nearly identical except that /t/ is voiceless and /d/ is voiced; and it is the voiceless /t/ that is added to verbs ending in voiceless sounds such as *pass*, and the voiced /d/ that is added to verbs ending in voiced sounds such as *pour*. (For students who have difficulty with this, and there are always some, one could contrast the voiced /d/ of *poured* with the voiceless /t/ of *port*; the voiceless ending of *passed*, on the other hand, makes it identical in sound to *past*. We may feel that we are adding the same suffix to *pass* and *pour*, but it is actually assimilated to the sound preceding it, which determines the choice between /t/ or /d/. In words like *want* and *flood* which already end in /t/ or /d/, a new syllable must be sounded for the suffix to be heard; hence the form of the suffix in this case is the syllabic /ed/. The principle of assimilation illustrated here is found again and again in English phonology. It is also seen in other contexts, as in the

tendency of two societies to assimilate to each other in some ways. It is a principle that is generally operative in human affairs.

Second, the distribution of the past tense suffix forms illustrates the fact that language is patterned. The extent to which language is patterned on its three levels— phonology, morphology, and syntax—is not apparent without a full and accurate description. For example, until the operation here of assimilation is understood, the systematic nature of the distribution of past tense suffix forms cannot be seen. The fact that language is systematic in ways like this is important. It is important because the human mind craves evidence of patterning wherever it can be found. This is what we get from the study of science in the liberal arts curriculum, evidence that the physical universe is patterned, that such phenomena as the elements in the Periodic Table and the planets in their orbits follow patterns of occurrence and motion that we can understand and describe. We crave this evidence because it tells us that our universe is comprehensible to us, that we are at home here. Things make sense. That our language itself makes sense in this way is shown by structural and generative descriptions to an extent that was not possible before. Language is proving to be patterned, in fact, in ways and to a degree that were formerly unsuspected.

Third, while language is highly patterned, very little of the patterning is controlled consciously. No native speaker of English has to remember to add /t/ to *pass* and /d/ to *pour*, and not vice versa; he does it automatically, and not just because he knows these particular verbs by heart. The first time anyone mentioned that something had been "bleeped" out of a television interview, the new verb was given the appropriate /t/ ending, the choice in such a matter being determined by the structure of the language. This is the sort of linguistic knowledge, and there is a very great deal of it, that each speaker learns unconsciously during childhood and retains unconsciously thereafter. Each language has its own peculiar "knowledge" of this sort, so that what is second nature to a native speaker of English might seem downright perverse to a foreigner trying to learn the language. Most Spanish speakers, for example, have great difficulty mastering the distribution of our past tense suffix forms. We see from this that there is a way of learning and knowing quite distinct from what occurs on the conscious level. The unconscious learning ability is apparently not related to the kind of ability that is measured by IQ tests, since even a moron possesses complete knowledge on the unconscious level of the patterning of his language. This language ability simply comes with being human. A large part of the aim of the new grammar is to arrive at an explicit understanding of unconsciously held language knowledge, so that we can glimpse this aspect of what it means to be human.

Fourth, the distribution of the past tense suffix forms in English is

concealed by our writing system. Since all three ..ms of the suffix are represented by the spelling "ed," the very existenc of distinct versions is ignored (which is one reason the foreigner has troub. learning to use them: he gets no help from spelling). English writing patterns nd speech patterns do not match with perfect consistency. They are differen orders of things, after all, speech being language itself with all its patterning, and writing being a way of recording or representing speech. That language exists independently of writing and prior to writing is a fact we print-oriented Americans continually tend to lose sight of. Yet it is an important fact: what makes us human is language, not literacy.

Fifth, we can observe, if we know something about earlier English spelling practices, that representation of the past suffix forms was during one period quite specific and accurate. Look at the spelling in the following lines from the 1598 Quarto of Shakespeare's 1 Henry IV:

Those prisoners in your highness name demanded (I, iii, 24)

. . . and still hee smild and talkt (I, iii, 41)

In this text from the Early Modern English period, evidently reliable spellings are used for the three suffix forms, "ed" for /ed/, "d" for /d/, and "t" for /t/. This Early Modern practice is not only interesting in its variance from our own practice, but is also a useful indicator of meter in some lines For example, the past tense form in the line, "And pay the debt I never promised" (I, ii, 231) from the same text presumably has the syllabic /ed/ suffix, giving the verb three syllables (which serves the meter). If the two-syllable pronunciation with /t/ were intended, the word would appear as "promist." The fact that forms like "promised" with syllabic /ed/ and "talkt" with simple /t/ appear in the same text shows, incidentally, that alternative forms were available in speech and that hence choices between them were to be made consciously. This circumstance may account for the Early Modern practice of specifying by spelling the choice made in each instance, in contradistinction to the modern practice of not specifying such choices, now determined automatically and unconsciously. We see from this that the relationship between spelling and sound in English—that is, between our writing and our language—is a variable one. Spelling conventions may reflect language accurately enough, or they may be arbitrary and inconsistent in ways that language principles cannot be. It is the difference between conventions and principles.

Finally, the existence of distinct versions of the past tense suffix illustrates the important structural principle of allomorphic variation, by which a morpheme, or minimal meaning-unit, may be realized in various shapes, or allomorphs, in various circumstances. As allomorphs, these endings occur in complementary distribution: each has a specific environment in which it must occur, and none may occur in the environment of another. (The voiceless /t/

ending is never found in the place of the voiced /d/ ending, and vice versa.) We might observe here that the modern spelling "ed" is actually morphemic; that is, it represents the morpheme of the past tense suffix, which is realized as /ed/, /t/, or /d/ according to phonetic environment. The Early Modern spelling practice noted in the preceding paragraph is, on the other hand, phonemic, representing the distinct sound-signals /ed/, /t/, and /d/ rather than their common morphemic function. This question of allomorphic variation, like that of allophonic variation, is a teasing one to some minds because it locates the morpheme in a realm of ideal entities which are realized not in single shapes but rather in sets of shapes. The past tense morpheme "ed" in English is not /ed/, not /t/, and not /d/ — not any one more than any other—but in all three together.

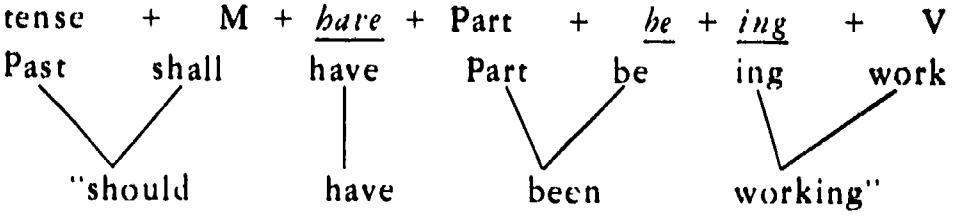
Before returning to the question of how the new grammar has actually been adapted for school use, let's look briefly at a second example of the new content, this one from generative-transformational grammar. The generative approach to language focuses on the sentence-creating mechanism that resides in every human mind. Every speaker of English is capable, except for the limitations of time, of creating an infinite number of English sentences and of recognizing newly met utterances as sentences or as non-sentences. This is not because we carry around an infinity of sentences in our memories, but because we have certain finite sentence-forming procedures which we use to create or recognize new sentences. Generative grammar aims to discover, as far as possible, this sentence-forming ability by developing an explicit model of it. If we can devise a set of rules or procedures that can do the same things as our internal sentence-forming mechanism does, we will be able to see what it is that we "know" as the only language-possessing creature.

As an example of generative procedures we can take the rule of basic English verb phrases. Such phrases as "eats," "has eaten," and "will be eating" might suggest that the English verb system is quite complicated, with the simple present, the present perfect, and the future progressive being very differently constituted—and of course we have many other forms. Reducing these phrases to basics, generative grammar finds that two elements are present in every English verb phrase: the verb itself and tense. That is, in a sentence like "I eat" the verb phrase is made up of the verb *eat* plus present tense. "Ate" is of course made up of *eat* plus past tense, and one or the other of the two tenses is necessarily present: "I eat" or "I ate." In a more complex phrase like "has eaten," the basic elements include *eat* and *have*. Tense is here carried by *have*, in that that the form is "has" rather than "had." But there is also the form of *eat*, not the simple form here but the past participle. This element, the past participle form of the verb, is associated with the auxiliary *have*; that is, we don't say "I have eat" or "I eaten" but use the two pieces in

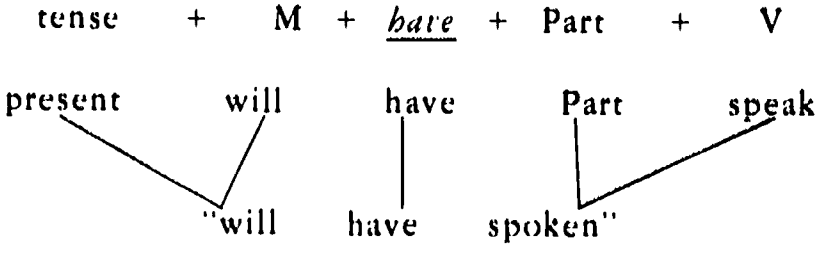
tandem, "I have eaten." They actually constitute a single element together, therefore—an element we can label the perfect aspect and symbolize as *have* + Part. The phrase "has eaten" consists of three elements, then: tense, *have* + Part, and the verb *eat*.

The phrase "will be eating" is the most complex of the three we have chosen. It contains the verb *eat* once again and tense, but this time the tense (present) is carried by the modal *will*; if it were past the form would be "would." There is also *be* and the present participle form of *eat* ending in *ing*. These two pieces, *be* and the present participle, are associated just as are *have* and the past participle, constituting a single element. We can call *be* plus the present participle the progressive aspect, and symbolize it as *be* + *ing* (since the present participle invariably has the *ing* ending).

We have seen from these examples that English verb phrases have two obligatory elements, tense and the verb, and three optional elements, modal, *have* + Part, and *be* + *ing*. Tense, either present or past, is carried by the first item in the verb phrase. Using the symbol V for main verb and M for modal (*will, shall, can, may, must*), and using parentheses to indicate those elements which are optional, we can represent the various possibilities for the English verb phrase by the sequence; tense + (M) + (*have* + Part) + (*be* + *ing*) + V. This is an inclusive formula, representing verb phrases ranging in complexity from "talk" to "should have been working." In "I talk" the verb phrase has only the two obligatory elements, tense + V. In "I should have been working," all of the optional elements are present, coming together in this way:



In "I will have spoken," some but not all of the optional elements are present, *be* + *ing* being omitted, and the verb phrase is generated as follows:



The discovery that English verb phrases, which had seemed so various in their structure, are patterned according to a neat and simple formula was one of the early breakthroughs of generative grammar. For centuries our verb system's clear design had been obscured by school grammar paradigms mod-

eled on the Latin conjugations, with separate columns for present, past progressive, future perfect, etc. The generative formula may seem mathematically abstract, but its abstraction is powerful, stating in one line what might fill a page in spelled-out paradigms. More important, it is a large step in the direction of discovering the English sentence-forming mechanism. The formula is a fairly simple design which nonetheless generates a wide range of English verb phrase structures. It helps us to see how a language, with its infinite set of sentences, can be learned by us, and just what sort of thing it is that we learn.

Here, then, we have two items from the new grammar, the allomorphic division of the "ed" suffix and the generative formula for the verb phrase. When such items are taken up by a teaching establishment (including textbook writers and publishers) which is still burdened with the need to justify what it does in terms of behavioral objectives, odd things are bound to happen. Students are not likely to be led into the discovery of these matters and their implications, as they might be in a science class. They are likely instead to be simply presented with the facts and formulas and then drilled in them, required to supply verbs which take the various suffix forms or make up verb phrases which correspond to the various possibilities implied by the generative formula. This is a time-honored method in English grammar study, but with the new grammar as its content it is certain to produce awkward moments. Hanging in the air while students dutifully supply past tense forms and verb pharses to fit the drills will be the question, "Why are we doing this?" Since everyone has been choosing the expected suffix forms and making appropriately-designed verb phrases all his speaking life, what is the point of the drill? Truly there is very little. In a program geared to improving language skills, the new grammar is robbed of its point.

I do not want to seem to discount language skills. Of course these matter a great deal, and of course the English teacher has the responsibility, among others, of fostering them. Behavioral objectives do have a place in the English classroom—along with humanistic goals. This is the place to work on writing—and to enjoy literature. It is above all the place to study language, but this activity needs to be transferred from the behavioral confines, where it has never really belonged and never succeeded, out into the humanistic realm.

The revolution in English appears to be in its mid-way phase, with the new grammar displacing the old, but in a superficial way. The new ideas and devices, misused in the service of old purposes and practices, often seem tiresome and pointless. There is widespread discomfiture, but is this not in all probability a sort of growing pains? Surely it is only a matter of time until the authentic new English—unapologetically of the liberal arts, true to itself—comes to the fore.

FROM THE STATE SPECIALIST'S DESK

LOIS CAFFYN

State Department of Education

Since the "Alternative Plan" for high-school graduation requirements first appeared last year in *Bulletin 201*, from the State Department of Education, and was reprinted in this column in December 19 3, there has been discussion of its implications for the English language arts which may be of interest to language arts teachers.

The plan is alternative to the established state requirements of seventeen units of credit, which must include "four units of English Language Arts. (When in the judgment of the high school principal, a pupil can profit more by taking another subject, the principal is authorized to waive one unit of this requirement)."

A local district or school choosing the alternative plan may prepare its own statement of graduation requirements, have it approved by the local board, and submit it to the state board for approval.

During the year 1973-74, fewer than a half dozen districts have chosen to go through the rather strenuous process of preparation with student and community involvement and have received state board approval. A few others have worked on alternative plans but have not as yet completed them with full approval. If an unscientific generalization can be made regarding those plans that have been approved, it might be that they tend to require more units and specific courses than schools have required before.

Applicable to both plans, the *Bulletin 201* statement about "Granting Credit" reads thus:

Credit shall be granted either by:

1. Successfully completing classroom work.
2. Validating examinations indicating competence—to be administered by the local district.
3. Independent Study Program.
   a. Independent learning programs must be organized according to curricular units and steps or phases which have been established by the school.
   b. The school shall organize an independent study committee to review student proposals. Sponsoring teachers shall also be represented. Student proposals must have committee approval.
   c. Planned programs of independent study must be an extension of the regular school program in terms of a planned indepth study of a particular subject area.
   d. The responsibilities of the sponsoring teacher should be spelled

out by the school. Also, the sponsoring teacher must be properly certified.

e. Student credit for planned independent learning programs must comprise or be the equivalent of a unit of work or fractional part thereof.

f. In addition to meeting the above criteria, the instructor must specifically list for each student the criteria that must be met for successful completion of the program.

g. Equipment and learning materials must be available as part of the planned program for independent study.

4. Approved part-time cooperative training program as defined in the currently approved State Plan and the Policy Handbook of the Vocational Education Section, State Department of Education.

Under the alternative plan the school must require "the completion of at least seventeen units of instruction, or the equivalent, which shall include one unit of American History and at least one-half unit of American Government including the Constitution of the United States (K.S.A. 72-1103), in appropriate courses as developed by the school district. It is the responsibility of the school to cooperatively work out with the student a personalized program that is appropriate and relevant to his capabilities, needs and interests. . . ."

The application of the "personalized educational program" to the English language arts suggests (1) the student achievement in basic learnings may be determined by competence developed rather than by courses taken or hours spent in the classroom; (2) that, in addition to short-term electives, this provides an additional way of dealing with individual differences; and (3) that English—even language arts—is no longer considered a discipline necessary for study in Kansas high schools.

As has been suggested in *Nongraded Quarter Selectives*, any school offering short-term electives might well require a minimum number of courses in each of several groups, such as composition, speech/drama, literature and language study. If for example, every ninth grader were required to take two terms of "Basic Composition" before entering the elective program, the teacher of each basic composition course would prepare in advance a brief of the course, including at least a statement of the course objectives, the desired outcome stated in terms of observable student behaviors that the teacher would accept as evidence of learnings to be included in the course. The teacher would also prepare an examination within the confines of the stated objectives, very like the final examination to be given the class.

If, then, a ninth grader, having seen the list of objectives—perhaps a dozen of them should wish to "challenge" the exam before enrolling—he might do so. If he should pass it at the level previously understood and agreed

upon by all concerned, he would receive credit and move on to other work. If he did not "win" over the exam, he would proceed with the course as usual.

Also, if a student should progress into a basic course up to ten days, demonstrating a high degree of competence in the learnings to be included in the course, the teacher might offer the student individually an opportunity to challenge the exam and quiz out of the remainder of the course. If he should choose to challenge and should win, he would complete the term in independent study for that class period. This procedure would, of course, necessitate the student's settling on an acceptable project and obtaining an adviser for the study, according to the school's policy.

A teacher of a 36-week course who is flexible enough to have one or two students working for a time on other than group activities might also permit a student to quiz out of a specific unit of basic study by challenging the test successfully.

In any case, the student would be expected to demonstrate maintenance of the quiz-out competency in all his classes. If he should become careless, he might be requested to take a refresher to validate his quiz-out credit. All this would be stated in writing at the beginning for all concerned and would proceed only with the approval of the school administrator and the parents, as well as the teacher and the student.

One excellent independent study project appropriate for such a student might be a Reading Focus. With assistance from the teacher, the student would select an area of reading need or special interest, such as a particular author, a historical period, or a literary genre, and just read. At the end of the term he would make his own kind of report to his adviser, perhaps by simply having a conference and submitting a list of materials read, perhaps by writing his observations or talking to the class. It is important that the anticipated report should not be such as to disturb the student's immersion in the reading.

The whole matter of eliminating a state, and perhaps a local, requirement for English, along with the humanitarian intangibles that accompany it, comes almost in direct contradiction to a rising demand that schools concentrate on the development of student competency in the Three R's, spelling and handwriting. The demand comes from employers frustrated with the incompetence of numerous high-school graduates; from parents and grandparents who feel themselves much better prepared than present-day youth; from administrators of vocational-technical schools, who a few years ago wanted their students freed from the rigors of academic learning; and from observers of a marked drop in nationwide scores on standardized and College Entrance Examination Board tests. According to a recent article in the *English Journal*, among alternative schools that a few months ago were being set up to give students nonschool experiences, there is now interest in an alternative school

for basic academic education and competence, with stiff authoritarian discipline and a get-it-or-get-out policy.

The wind of educational opinion and pressure "bloweth where it listeth"; but whatever the administrative organization or requirements, it remains the responsibility of Kansas schools to give students the skills, competence, and intellectional growth they would not receive anywhere else.

In line with the current national concern regarding invasion of privacy and attendant legislation, guidance personnel in state leadership positions are preparing a position paper on the keeping of student and personnel records. The purpose is to help school and employers protect themselves from possible accusation or suit.

Just what changes may come about as local schools revise their policies regarding personal record information remains to be seen. Classroom teachers, however, need to be aware that such records must be made available to parents, to student subjects eighteen years of age or older, and to student subjects in certain circumstances at an earlier age. Anecdotal items of a highly subjective nature might prove particularly damning when seen by persons directly concerned, or particularly petty if brought into court. Perhaps it behooves us all not to put in writing or on tape anything we would not have read or heard.