ABSTRACT
             A method for stimulating and facilitating
organizational writing in the secondary school is described in this
paper. Pictorial sequences are coordinated and arranged to typify the
four major styles of writing: narrative, descriptive, expository, and
persuasive. These sequences both portray a meaningful event in
keeping with the writing style and help to elicit the corresponding
organization of written discourse. A model is presented showing the
pupil-teacher interaction in the visual-writing process. The model
proposes that visual compositions can help generate the student's
language and feelings to facilitate organizational writing of
coherent paragraphs and, at the same time, to improve certain reading
skills of sequence and organization. Teaching strategy guidelines
suggest this student involvement in the visual-writing techniques
before teaching lessons in style and organization. (Author/TO)

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Teaching Writing Styles Through Visual Compositions

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Why is the picture worth the proverbial thousand words?
It's because the viewer has a language. The picture sparks a
flow of thoughts as the perceiver descriptively, imaginatively,
and affectively fills in the picture's parameters. During
the perceiving moment, the viewer actively engages his
thoughts and feelings to an understanding of the visual mes--
sage. One's thousand words could be qualitatively similar
to another's, neither richer nor poorer in expression, but
uniquely idiosyncratic to three variables of communication:
the viewer's language facility, his background knowledge
and attitude toward the visual theme, and the visual persua-
siveness of the message designer.

The mental processes involved in selective viewing
are not unlike that involved in fluent reading. During the
reading process, the reader actively participates in the
verification of aroused meanings embedded in the linear
format of lines of print (5), (17). The mental strategies
of sampling, predicting, monitoring, confirming, and fi-
nally understanding of the author's intent would appear to
be similarly applied in deriving meaning from a visual com-
position. The designer of the visual has combined objects,
space, light, and mood and personality reflections to inti-
mate a particular message. The viewer "reads" the message
after he has taken the time to mentally coordinate the re-
lationships among the design. The visual designer, like
the author, strives for unity in his composition to communi-
cate precisely and effectively. In achieving the unified

design, the elements of the visual composition have been
balanced and related to the designer's intent (1).

The Trilogy of Discourse

While the fluent reader and viewer may engage in
similar mental operations as receptors of communication,
the writer and his counterpart, the visual composer, engage
in the communicative process as transmitters. They use
their respective mediums to organize and transmit central
ideas. To influence, they sense out the thoughts and emo-
tions of their intended audiences so that they will be
suitably responsive and receptive to specific messages (6).

The following analogous relationship is therefore
suggested regarding these participants in the communication
process:

THE READER : THE WRITER :: THE VIEWER : THE VISUAL COMPOSER

The processes of selective viewing and designing of visual
composition would appear to be related in active mental or-
ganization, just as good reading and writing depend upon
clear and logical thinking (9). Moffett's thesis regarding
the functional role of discourse in the English curriculum
sheds light on the reasons for potential communication gaps
between receiver and transmitter. He writes (10):

> I have suggested structuring English curriculum
> according to the relations of speaker-listener-sub-
> ject as the ultimate context within which all our
> other concerns may be handled functionally and hol-
> istically, moving the student in his writing and
> reading from one kind of actual discourse to the
> next in a sequence which permits him to learn style,

logic, semantics, rhetoric, and literary form
continuously through practice as first or second
person. Ideally this sequence would correspond
both to his own intellectual and emotional growth...
The structure of the subject must be meshed with the
structure of the student. A major failure of edu-
cation has been to consider the logic of one almost
to the exclusion of the psychologic of the other.

If the elements of discourse are the transmitter,
the receiver, and the message, it is the preoccupation with
the teaching of the understanding and interpretation of the
latter that becomes an overriding concern of the language
arts curriculum. The use of visuals to engage students in
the activities of discourse - reflecting, writing, and read-
ing - could provide a bridge, a common message bond, be-
tween the student writer and the class group receptors.

The Use of Visuals to Facilitate Discourse

Sources have commented on the implementation of vis-
uals to stimulate language usage and expansion in the school
setting. Advice to teachers of English (18); pocket books
for student use (7), (8), (14); and a filmstrip program (15)
have suggested the use of pictures and visual sequences to
generate oral and written expression. A visual strategy
plan provided concrete suggestions for the secondary teach-
er to assist students in the improvement of paragraph organ-
ization (13). More recently, in an article tracing the his-
tory of the Visual Literacy movement, Debes and Williams (3)
described current programs for younger children in which
visual/verbal connections were made to facilitate reading
and writing skills.

How could the teacher logically prepare to use the
power of visuals to not only stimulate students' language
facility but also to get to the deeper concerns of unity,
coherence, and transition in paragraph organization? One
way to do this would be to restructure the analogous rela-
tionship suggested earlier in this paper regarding the par-
ticipants in the communication process. The teacher would
become the visual composer to facilitate students' function-
al usage of thinking, writing, and reading of categories of
discourse. The "what to teach" of language surface struc-
ture would be a product of "how" the student processed his
thinking and writing facility in relation to the visual com-
position. Written composition would be a projection of
visual organization; transcribing, as a product of thought.
This teacher/pupil interaction would accordingly be represented:

THE VISUAL COMPOSER ──➤ THE VIEWER = THE WRITER = THE READER
        (Teacher)   (Student)   (Student)   (Student)

The transposition of order implies that a reading
proficiency of categories of discourse could become an out-
come and a by-product of writing involvement. This sug-
gestion is invariant to the commonly accepted notion of
the logical sequence of skills progression in the language
arts curriculum, that is, that facility with reading should
precede facility with writing. Yet, through the process of
writing as an outgrowth of mental organization stimulated
by visual composition, students could be led to understand

writers' techniques of paragraph organization. This could

then generalize to an understanding of the organization of

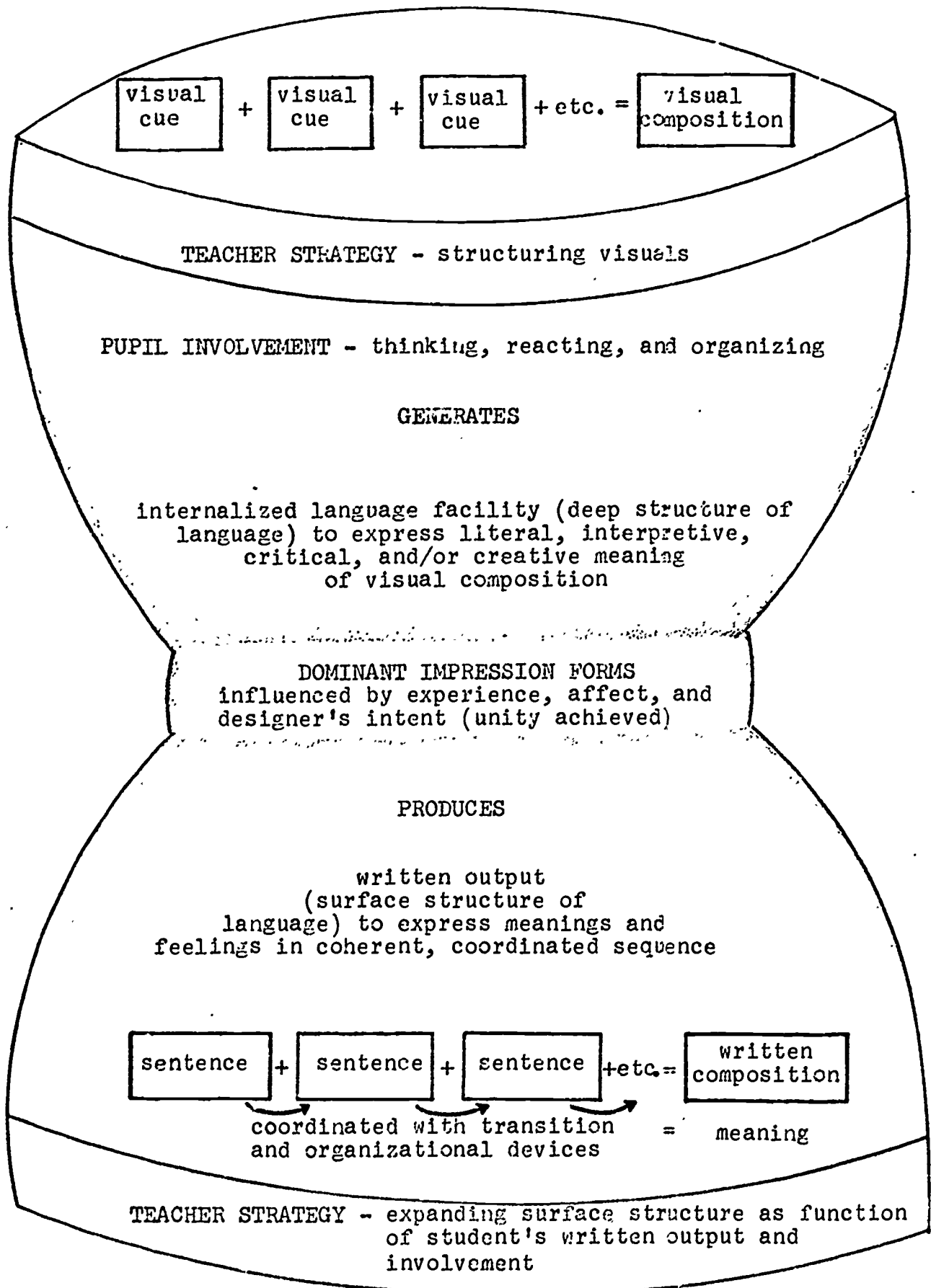discourse in the content area subjects.

The Four Categories of Discourse

The four traditional categories of discourse - nar-
ration, description, exposition, and argumentation - could
provide the global backdrop for visual composition as they
do for written composition. Teachers could turn to many
excellent sources to investigate more fully the thought pro-
cessing involved in composing and reading each of the four
categories. Some student texts are conveniently organized
according to these four styles (2), (4). Another is ar-
ranged into major lessons on reading and writing descrip-
tive, narrative, and expository paragraphs (9). A theor-
etical framework for the growth of discourse outward from
the child's ability to express himself to himself provides
a conceptual point-of-view (10), while a sequential cur-
riculum made up of particular practices and assignments for
children of differing grade levels provides a practicum (11).
The secondary school student's analysis of organizational
structure could be further sharpened with critical reading
of selected passages by famous authors (12).

A Model: Illustrating the Use of Visuals to Generate Writing

A model is conceptualized in the shape of an hour
glass (see Illustration 1.) to graphically illustrate the
teacher-pupil interaction in the process of bridging from
visual composition to literary composition. A key strategy

visual cue + visual cue + visual cue + etc. = visual composition

TEACHER STRATEGY - structuring visuals

PUPIL INVOLVEMENT - thinking, reacting, and organizing

GENERATES

internalized language facility (deep structure of
language) to express literal, interpretive,
critical, and/or creative meaning
of visual composition

DOMINANT IMPRESSION FORMS
influenced by experience, affect, and
designer's intent (unity achieved)

PRODUCES

written output
(surface structure of
language) to express meanings and
feelings in coherent, coordinated sequence

sentence + sentence + sentence + etc. = written composition

coordinated with transition
and organizational devices   =   meaning

TEACHER STRATEGY - expanding surface structure as function
of student's written output and
involvement

implied is that written expression is a function of the
process of using one's language and not a product of being
instructed "how to write". Therefore, this model may be an-
tagonistic to those secondary school teachers who teach
grammar and usage as distinct curriculum "units" apart from
the function of composition.

An inquiry approach of the study of the surface
structure of language, particularly grammar, may be unset-
tling to teachers since the results of student direction in
writing may neither be predictable nor controllable (16).
Children writing from cues in visual sequences could pro-
duce examples of form and style that contradict the language
concepts the teacher holds or that do not mesh with the
rules of standardization he knows. For example, when Curtis,
a 16 year-old sophomore saw a bullfight sequence, he wrote
to describe one aspect of the action, "The matador is sword-
ing the bull". Incorrect verb usage is the error of English,
but that particular scene was poignantly expressed. Since
Curtis will be dealing with a reexamination of his own
living language after visualizing and usage, he may find
the study of language more interesting and meaningful.

Steps in the Teacher/Pupil Interaction of the Writing Process

1. Teacher Structuring: Teacher input is called for at the
beginning and end of the composition process. Initially
the teacher as visual composer structures a visual compos-
ition with the intended pupil outcome of written composition
generally organized according to one or a combination of the

four categories of discourse. For instance, if the teacher
wishes to evoke a descriptive-type paragraph, a scene could
be filmed where objects and/or people are located in visual
proximity to each other. In this way a spatial organiza-
tion would be implied and the relating of this spatial re-
lationship will help organize the student's writing. The
student would be prompted to use transition words and phrases
such as, "by the...,behind the..., across from the...,"etc.
On the other hand, if the goal was to portray an expository
type organization, a scene such as a group of girls baking
a cake or another group replacing parts on a car could be
shot. The major point is not to film just the finished
cake or the renovated car, but to shoot each step in the
process of the sequential action so that the student would
be led into this type of organization. The student would
then be cued to use transition words such as, "next...,
after that..., finally,"etc., that lend coherence to an
expository paragraph.

The visual composer must look out into the world
for visual compositions that can be captured or that have
been captured on photograph. A visual composition is,in
essence, a sequence of pictures that infers a unified mean-
ing. The visual composition will unravel threads of meaning
step-by-step before students' eyes. Almost any life exper-
ience can become context for the visual message. The actual
text, the written message, will be supplied by the student
writer.

2. <u>Formulating the Dominant Impression</u>: The teacher will show
the visual composition to a captivated student audience whose
eyes are directed towards one focal point. Once the first
visual is shown, each student's mental processing begins.
He starts to predict meaning from forthcoming visuals, sam-
ples cues from visuals in focus to verify and confirm mean-
ing, and attempts to recall meaning from cues of previously
shown visuals that associate with on-going meaning. Unlike
television or the movies where the speaker's or narrator's
language is "in context" with the visualized scene, this
strategy asks the student to supply his language and reactions
to visual sequences that come from the world about him. Since
all students are unique in their internalized facility with
language and in their attitudes toward certain topics, this
involvement could generate differing levels of meaning in
written discourse, i.e. literal, interpretive, critical, and
or creative. The range could run from a straight literal
description of what was viewed to a creative written work
that was touched off by an inferred meaning of the visual
message.

Whatever level the student achieves, it becomes im-
portant for the sake of unity, organization, and clarity that
he formulates his dominant impression of the meaning <u>he</u> feels.
This necessitates at least two showings of the entire vis-
ual sequence. After the first showing, which was to esta-
blish the meaning of the whole, this dominant impression
should form. This suggests more input than just arriving
at the main idea. Not only should the student be influenced

by tne concrete meaning and asked to explicat^ the central
idea of that sequence, but also he should be asked to react
to that meaning. In this way he will arrive at a point-
of-view that will organize both his affect ard his language
on that topic. This desired outcome takes tiaining for
those pupils who have difficulty getting beyand the literal
level of meaning.

3. Jotting Down: However, whatever level of meaning the
student generates in the dominant impression sentence, this
point-of-view becomes the unifying element of the written
composition. For instance, after viewing the cake baking se-
quence,
Gloria literally writes, "The three girls baked a cake for
the class party", while Sarah sitting alongside, writes on
a more interpretive and creative level, "Baking a cake can
be a messy but tasty business." Each girl having internal-
ized meaning at different levels must select visual cues
during the second viewing that relate to their own unifying
impression.

"Context clues" that relate to this dominant impres-
sion are abstracted from each visual frame in the sequence.
These clues must also relate to ideas suggested by visuals
before and after the one that is serving as the stimulus for
writing so that a smoothness of paragraph sequence is achieved.
As each student jots down ideas and suggestions from partic-
ular frames, he should also use those transitional words
and phrases that will help lend continued coherence and
smoothness in the relationships described in the paragraph.

4. _Polishing_: When the student has completed this joint
viewing and writing activity, he should be given time to
smooth out the roughness of the jotted down fragments. He
will still be able to visualize the meaning of what he saw
and this will also aid in the completion of the finished
product, a coherent paragraph or compos..... .a.

5. _Teaching_: Now the teacher interacts with his class group
to expand surface structure language growth and development.
While these strategy possibilities are numerous, the teacher
should also direct a major effort to an analysis of the style
of writing that students followed and whether this style was
exemplified and aided by the visual composition. Since the
class group has been mentally involved in the conceptualizing
of a particular category of discourse, the process of organ-
ization, they may be able to perceive this self-same struc-
ture more readily in reading experiences, the content of pro-
cess. This awareness will strengthen overall facility with
discourse and the students' ability to relate central ideas
to supportive ones in writers' organizational structure.

The teacher's greatest advantage at this point is
that a common communicative denominator is shared by the
class group. Therefore, the individuals within the group
shift roles as transmitters and receivers of the message of
written discourse as discussion and analysis occurs of in-
dividual written compositions. Specific examples of student's
writings that established decisive dominant impression,
that were vivid representations of particular scenes or ac-
tions, that connected ideas before and after in the sequence,

that utilized figurative language to capture the essence of
a particular impression, or that developed the organizational
structure intended would be relevant to all members of the
class group since the experience remains in the "mind's eye".

In conclusion, this model of teaching form and func-
tion of written discouse has in essence meshed the structure
of the subject with the structure of the student (10).
While the burden is placed on the teacher as visual com-
poser, the outcome of unified and coherent writing will be
rewarding indeed. The teacher must ally share in the be-
lief that organized written discourse can be a realistic
goal for all students. This model provides a method for
tying language to concrete visual experiences and a basis
for the organization of thoughts regardless of one's
facility with the surface structure of language.

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