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ABSTRACT

This proceedings contains half of the papers presented at the third annual conference of the Association of Teachers of English Grammar. Papers in the proceedings are: "Grammar as a Method, Not as a Subject" (Marilyn N. Silva); "Using Humor to Teach Grammar, or the Grammarian as Stand-up Comic" (Frank Peters); "Grammatical Competence and the Teaching of Grammar" (Jim Kenkel and Robert Yates); "About Computational Tools in the Teaching of Grammar and Writing" (Reinhold Schlieper); "The Crime" (Ed Vavra); "Writing Skills vs. Writing Skill: An Ambiguity Feeding the Arguments about Assessing" (Mary Hall); "Grammar Portfolios" (Cornelia Paraskevas); and "Visualizing the Language" (Bernice Level Farrar). The conference schedule is included. (RS)

Proceedings of the 3rd Annual Conference of the Association for the Teaching of English Grammar

June 18 & 19, 1992

Professional Development Center
Pennsylvania College of Technology
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Editorial Note

Only half of the papers presented at the conference are represented here, the other presenters having opted not to submit their papers. The only exception to this is the paper by Verna De Jong. She submitted her paper on disk, without a hard (paper) copy. Problems with the disk file made the paper unreadable, and repeated attempts to contact her were unsuccessful.

- Ed Vavra
June 5, 1993

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Grammar as a Method, Not as a Subject

Marilyn N. Silva

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What is grammar good for? Many of us, I am sure, would contend that a knowledge of basic grammar is essential to being able to construct acceptable sentences and thus being able to write acceptable prose. But I see grammar as something more than one discipline in service of another. I see grammar as a way to encourage an understanding of the way English works, a portal into understanding the difficulties non-native speakers have with the language, a mirror into the workings of the mind, a means of fostering critical thinking, and a way to appreciate the intricacies of good literature. In short, a knowledge of grammar can be both an end in itself and an introduction to those areas of knowledge we consider essential to the education of a literate and well-rounded person. But exactly how to teach grammar often poses serious difficulties. Given the scope of the grammar of English (peruse for example, *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* by Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik), I have made a decision about the teaching of grammar, and that is to teach grammar as a methoda principled approach to problem solvingrather than a subject with prescribed content and lots of nomenclature.

Before I tell you what I do when I teach English grammar, I'd like you to know how I got where I am. I am a linguist by training, and my graduate studies concentrated on the acquisition of language by children, so my bias is developmental. When I was assigned to teach the course entitled "Modern English Grammar" at California State University, Hayward, I had never had a formal course in what might be strictly called "the grammar of English," and here I was, faced with a number of decisions, the most important of which was, "What the heck am I going to teach?" I was told by the English department chair that he did not want this course to be a course in transformational grammar, and I also soon learned that although the course was upper division, my students would have little, if any, knowledge of grammar. I learned too that this sorry state of affairs was due to both implicit and explicit directives from the State Department of Education to the elementary and secondary schools NOT to teach grammar.

The situation was dire indeed. Most of my students would be taking the course, not because they had a burning desire to learn grammar, but because it was required by their major program, in particular "liberal studies", which is a teaching credential track major (in California, getting a teaching credential is a graduate level endeavor). So I found myself facing the task of teaching the teachers who would teach future generations of Californians. And I had the chance to make a difference. What would I do? How would I do it? I can't say that I didn't stumble around for a couple of quarters, but I have now developed a course and a nearly completed text/workbook designed to elicit maximal student interest and based on a number of pedagogical decisions.

The first of these decisions is to focus on the syntax of the language, not its phonology or morphology or its discourse properties, although I do make reference to these aspects of language when they help explain certain syntactic features. This approach allows me to limit the field of inquiry so that students can learn one facet of the language in depth within the confines of the ten-week quarter system.

The second decision was to focus on the

written, not the spoken language. This focus saves me from worrying about whether one spoken form (read: *dialect*) is to be considered "superior" to other spoken forms. It also provides an important service to students. They already know intuitively all about talking and conversing; however, the written language is still somewhat enigmatic to them. And the more literary the prose, the more enigmatic it tends to be. Often their reading skills are only slightly better than their writing skills.

The third decision was to provide for analysis "real" passages from accomplished writers rather than ad hoc sentences manufactured to exemplify particular syntactic constructions. To be sure, I often do make up simple examples to illustrate a point in lecture and discussion, but these artificial sentences (i.e., nonce sentences) are immediately followed by exercises comprised of scores of sentences culled from a variety of literary sources. Using sentences designed for communication rather than for exemplification results in more interesting and colorful exercises that often have value in themselves because they are funny (e.g. sentences taken from Bill Cosby's *Fatherhood*), macabre (like those taken from Bram Stoker's *Dracula* or Anne Rice's *The Witching Hour*), informative (like passages from Bronowski *Ascent of Man* and from newspaper and magazine articles), inspiring (sentences from Martin Luther King), and just downright silly (Dr. Seuss). I find that students frequently decide to go to the library to find the source material because their interest has been piqued. This alone seems enough justification for my approach.

Fourth, I use as examples and exercises sentences taken from writers in English representing a variety of ethnic backgrounds, both male and female. We thus analyze the prose of published men and women writers who are "Anglo", African-American, Hispanic, American Indian, Asian-American, and so on. By choosing the prose of a rainbow of authors, I indicate to my students that writing good English is politically correct. But, to tie this goal into my last one, students are exposed through these examples to a variety of viewpoints and experiences. Excerpts from Jung Chang's *Wild Swans*, for example, provide through pristine prose a glimpse of what it has been like to be a woman in China during the tumultuous changes in the twentieth century.

Fifth, I take a developmental approach. This feature of the course involves two phases. First, I try to anticipate the way students think. Rather than take the word of other linguists about what native speakers know about their language, then, I rely upon what students actually do and say in a grammar class. Thus both in class and in my workbook, I acknowledge that students may think about language in a way that grammarians have failed to predict, and I try to validate these ways of thinking and to show how traditions of grammar may deviate from these all too reasonable paths. For example, I begin by asking students to divide a pair of sentences into "two major chunks of information." I tell them that grammarians have long contended that when pressed, a native speaker of English can determine the boundaries of these chunks. The students must then contend with two very basic English sentences:

a) The child bounced the ball.

b) The chef cut the meat.

I ask the students to draw a slash mark "after the word which ends the first chunk." I next show the solution which grammarians typically give of dividing the sentences into subject and predicate phrase (without commenting on its "correctness"). I then go on to say: "But you may have split the sentences in a different way. Some students have claimed that it makes more sense to divide the sentences in the following manner instead." I then show a division between the verb and the object, a division which a small but significant number of students make each quarter. These students argue that it makes no sense to separate an actor from an action, that for example the action of bouncing is what makes a child an actor in the first place, and thus it is the ball that is the separate entity. I tell the students that the argument may have psychological or philosophical value, but it is not the argument used by grammarians. Students then hear that grammarians look for generalizations that hold across a number of instances, the few rules that govern the many possibilities for English sentences. So although psychologically and philosophically

speaking the students who would group agents and actions together have excellent grounds for doing so, from the point of view of grammarians, their analysis is ad hoc, valid only to a specific instance and not to the vast array of possible English sentences. I then demonstrate by presenting other examples in which the division into subject and predicate is not open to argument (i.e., intransitive sentences). By attacking the issue in this manner, I hope to show students not that they cannot do grammar, but that they haven't done it. I try to show them that they are reasonable people who think in ways that make sense. I try to show that grammarians think in ways that may differ from their own ways, but that grammarians' ways make sense, too. I try to show just how grammarians think, and why they think this way. In short, I try to show how to do grammar. In essence this approach is the central theme of my work. No instructor, no matter how gifted, can hope to teach the grammar of English to a class in the space of a quarter or semester. What we can do is teach students how to think about English grammar, how to formulate questions and provide possible answers, and how to research those questions they cannot immediately answer.

In many ways, I find this enterprise more rewarding than spoon-feeding information to students. and here is where my background as a developmentalist comes in. I believe with Piaget that knowledge is actively constructed by human beings, not passively absorbed or copied. And so, I attempt to teach grammar as a method and not as a subject. My hope is that students will come to understand the principles behind the construction of grammars, because they cannot in short period of time (perhaps not even in a lifetime) come to know all there is to know about English grammar itself.

The second way that my approach is developmental is in its progression from the simple to the complex. We begin with the most basic sentences having the most basic of syntactic structure (this last quarter, I used sentences from Dr. Seuss on the first quiz) and move on to increasingly complex sentences. More sophisticated sentences include new structures being studied and everything else which has gone before. Thus we build up our expertise over the quarter so that each new unit of study presupposes prior units. As students elaborate their knowledge of the workings of the language, they are constantly encouraged to review prior work, and they are essentially prohibited by the process from compartmentalizing their knowledge: they cannot allow themselves to forget last week's lesson, because it will be essential in understanding this week's and next week's too. For example, here is a sentence from William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*, used in the sample quiz from my last chapter, which investigates finite adverbial subordinate clauses, and includes also a review of content clauses and relative clauses: "Were one asked to characterize the life of religion in the broadest and most general terms possible, one might say that it consists of the belief that there is an unseen order, and that our supreme good lies in harmoniously adjusting ourselves thereto." Now this sentence contains not only four finite subordinate clauses, but also two non-finite subordinate clauses and one coordinated structure, along with assorted modificational devices, all of which have been previously studied. This sentence contrasts sharply with sentences like "Crystal had cleared the table" and "I went to bed in my underwear", from Iris Murdoch's *A Word Child*, and even from a more elaborately modified sentence like "The thorny bougainvillea burst in clumps from beneath the wild cherry laurel" from Anne Rice's *The Witching Hour*, which I use in the third week to test understanding of basic complementation in the predicate phrase. Notice that the sentences from Murdoch and Rice contain no subordination and no coordination, and contrast this simplicity to the deeply embedded offerings of the James sentence. Yes, students really can analyze all this stuff by the end of the course.

Another decision I made when designing this course was to teach structure before function. This perspective represents a major shift from the approach of the authoritative source I use for my analyses, Quirk et al.'s *Comprehensive Grammar of English*, which takes function as a prime. Again, my decision is tied into the developmental approach. As I see it, the distinction between struc-

ture and function is the distinction between the visible and the invisible that exists in all areas of knowledge and experience. Thus we learn the structure of the noun phrase with most of its potentialities before we learn about the various syntactic functions these constructions may have; we learn about the formulation of an infinitive clause first, and then learn about the plasticity of this structure in terms of the functional slots it may occupy: subject, object, complement, adverbial, adjectival, appositive. Students learn too about the nature of categories and about circularity. We can define subject in terms of word order as the NP that precedes a verb in a statement, and then show how other constructionsnot noun phrases at all, perhaps not even containing a noun within themcan slip very comfortably into that same slot. Structures are "visible" in that they are relatively concrete. But the function that a particular construction serves is backgrounded, in essence "invisible". Teaching structure as a prime is also taking a developmental approach.

In yet another effort to help students achieve an understanding of grammar as a method, I deemphasize nomenclature (I am not a traditionalist), in favor of their knowing how parts of a sentence relate to other parts, and how, for example, something that is not structurally a noun phrase can function as one. To equip them for this, I provide them with a methodology, a "toolbox" for deciding on a particular analysis. This toolbox includes a flowchart for determining the transitivity of noun phrases, syntactic tests like PASSIVE to decide whether a particular verb is in fact transitive, and CLEFT to decide whether a particular construction is serving as a direct object or adverbial in the higher clause, and a systematic elimination procedure to determine the function of infinitive clauses in certain problematic NP-infinitive strings that frequently occur in predicate phrases (See Tables 1-3). The flow chart and decision procedures are the result of my reflecting on the now near automatic processes I carry out when I analyze a sentence. These procedures are what I actually use when I "do grammar" and I have found that unraveling the process for my students in this form really does help them "get it."

The use of this methodology is central to the course, and students who have gotten through school by memorizing material have a bad time, until they realize that they are being challenged to think critically and to solve problems. Once they understand that in my view doing grammar is matter of manipulating sentence structures mentally and assessing the outcome of various syntactic permutations and tests, they realize that the course is more than a study of the structure of English. It is also a course in critical thinking, and some come to see it as a puzzle-solving course. This last perception comes about because of my focus on real sentences (those composed with communicative intent with no conscious thought given to syntax). And sometimes the sentences, being real, prove particularly challenging to our contrived categories. Students must sometimes come to grips with a sentence which defies the assessments we have developed in class. Students learn that I don't have all the answers, but I do have principled ways of dealing with language that lead me to choose a particular analysis. Students are free to disagree with my analyses as long as they don't say 'so-and-so says it's this way and not that.' They have to show by using syntactic tests, analogy, acceptability of permutations of the sentence and occasionally an appeal to semantics, how a particular analysis is superior to another. In short, students have to learn how to think and how to provide evidence for a particular analysis.

And here we come to the real intent of the course. It is a course in personal empowerment. Students come to understand that they are capable of understanding what once seemed to them inscrutable, impenetrable, and boring. When students master the method, they exude a sense of self-esteem and a trust in their own powers of analysis that are gratifying to me as a teacher. As for me, I feel that I have had an influence on future teachers, teachers who ought to know how their language works, and who now do. I too feel successful, and I do for several reasons. First, students ask me what the follow-up course is. In an institution where requirements are many, this question is a clear sign of appreciation. Second, students often complain to me that they are having

a difficult time reading books for their other courses because they unintentionally begin to analyze the sentences; thus they take the work home, as it were. And third, other instructors tell me that students who have been through my course express to them their new enthusiasm for grammar.

So just what do students learn in Modern English Grammar? They learn that grammar is not merely a discipline in the service of writing. They learn that language is far too elusive to be caught in any trap we might devise for it. They learn that interesting and provocative prose is worth reading and fun to analyze. They learn to think critically, and to apply their powers of analysis to new instances that come up in their reading, and indeed in their own writing. And they learn too, implicitly, that regardless of one's ethnic background, English belongs to all of us.

The study of grammar is really a study of the workings of the human mind (my degree in linguistics is at least partially responsible for this point of view), and the mind and grammar are both marvelous instruments. I believe in teaching grammar for its own sake, because it's there, it's marvelous, and it's ours.

Decision Procedure

When you encounter an infinitive clause inside the predicate phrase of a sentence, you can approach the difficulties of analysis by a systematic decision procedure. First, find what you believe to be the infinitive clause. And then you rule out possibilities in the following order:

1. Rule out the possibility that the infinitive clause is an adverbial of purpose;

2. Rule out the possibility that the infinitive clause is a modifier of the NP (either adjectival or appositive);

3. Rule out the possibility that the finite verb is ditransitive (i.e., a speech act verb);

4. Rule out the possibility that the finite verb is monotransitive (i.e., volition or affect verb);

5. When all the above possibilities are ruled out, the infinitive clause is a predicate complement.

Hint: If the VP of the main clause is passive, put the sentence back into the active voice. The status of the infinitive clause in an NP-infinitive clause string in the predicate phrase does not change in the conversion from passive to active and vice versa.

DECISION PROCEDURE FOR DETERMINING THE STATUS OF INFINITIVE CLAUSES

Q: **Does an NP precede the infinitive complementizer *to*:**

A: **NO.**
Q: **Can the finite verb form a grammatical sentence without the infinitive clause?**

A: **Yes.** ***Conclusion: the finite verb is intransitive; the infinitive clause is an optional adverbial.***

A: **No.** ***Conclusion: the finite verb is transitive; the infinitive clause is the direct object of the finite verb.***

A: **YES.**
Q: **Is the infinitive clause an adverbial of purpose (i.e., can *in order* be inserted in front of *to*?)**

A: **Yes.** ***Conclusion: the finite verb is monotransitive; the infinitive clause is an adverbial modifier.***

A: **No.**
Q: **Does the infinitive clause modify the NP?**

A: **Yes.** ***Conclusion: the infinitve clause belongs to the NP as an adjectival or appositive.***

A: **No.**

Q: **Is the finite verb a speech act?**

A: **Yes.** ***Conclusion: the finite verb is ditransitive; the predicate NP is the indirect object; the infinitive clause is the direct object.***

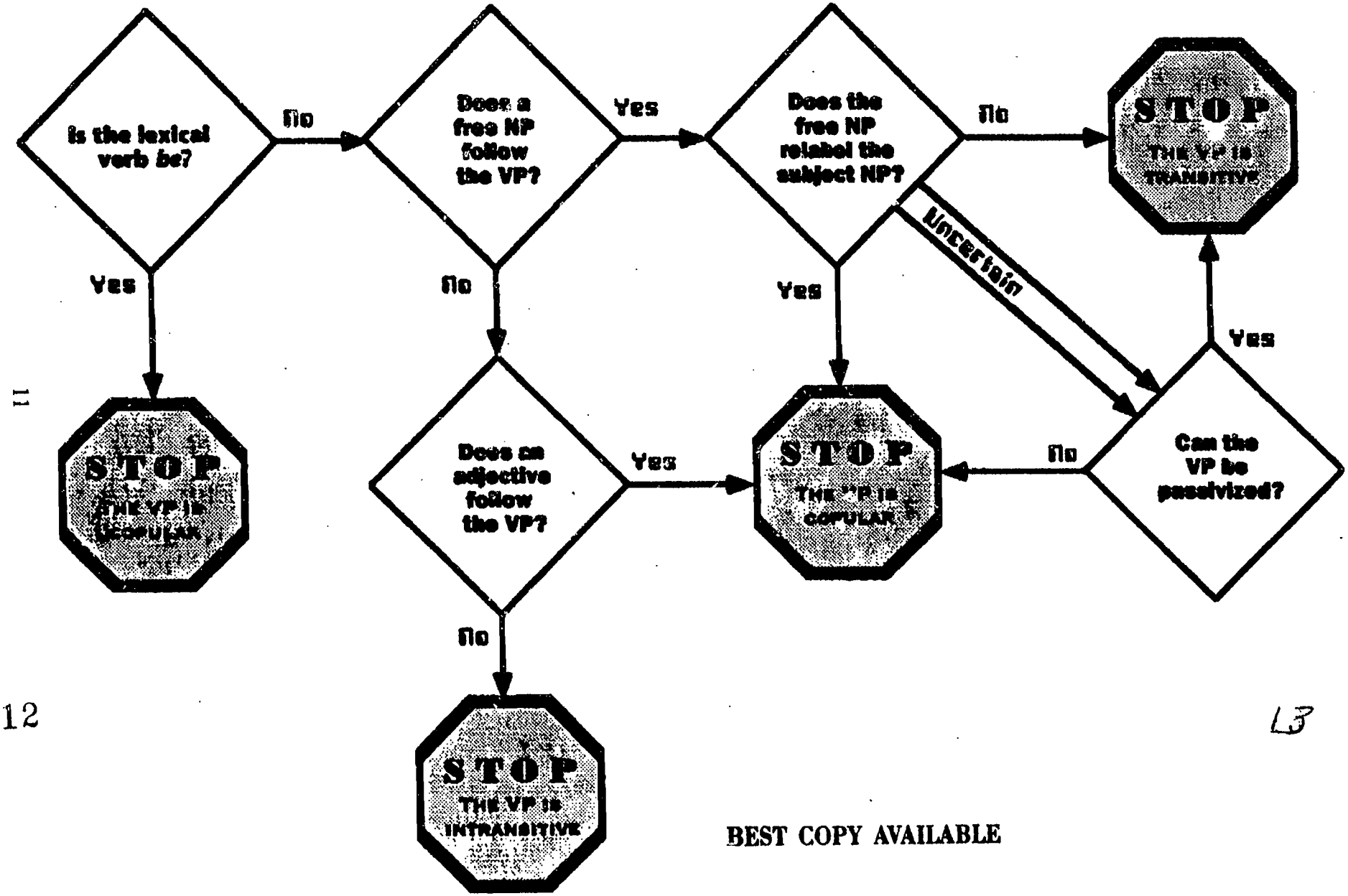
A: **No.**

Q: **Can *for* be inserted in front of the predicate NP?**

A: **Yes.** ***Conclusion: the finite verb is monotransitive; the predicate NP is the subject of the infinitive clause; the entire NP-infinitive string is the direct object of the finite verb.***

A: **No.** ***Conclusion: the finite verb is complex transitive; the predicate NP is the direct object of the finite verb; the infinitive clause is a "predication adjunct", a type of predicate complement.***

Decision Process for Determination of the Transitivity of Verb Phrases



Using Humor to Teach Grammar or The Grammarian as Stand-up Comic.

- Frank Peters

The teaching of grammar is often considered serious business, a priority of language education, a necessity for the development of communicational skills, and even the salvation a particular neighborhood school, the state of education, America's economy, religion in general, and the human race on grander scale. Given the committed political stance evidenced by those educators and members of the public who advocate concern about grammar teaching, it is at least vaguely possible that too serious a tone may be being generated (I've always wanted to use a modal progressive passive) in textbook and classroom presentation of the subject. If this is the case, we need to investigate alternative presentation methods for grammar, humorous presentation being just one alternative.

The purpose of the paper is to investigate how humor might be used in grammar teaching in order to overcome student hesitancy about learning grammar, to provide an air of relevancy which might encourage greater student interest and participation, and to offer opportunity to expand grammar application beyond the classroom.

Initially grammatical exemplification will be examined to determine whether inclusion of humorous examples might improve student interest and enjoyment of the subject. Secondly, relationship between humorous presentation and terminology acquisition will be investigated. Thirdly, joke and other "funny" texts will be analysed to determine whether humor dependence on grammatical relationship is integral or incidental.

I'll even take the risk of bombing in Williamsport.

Grammatical exemplification tends, too often, to be of a simplistic type with short sentences being used to illustrate a single point of syntax or semantics. To illustrate the indirect object, for instance, a sentence like "Mary gave John the book" is used. A more effective sentence might be "Mary gave John the brush-off" or "Mary gave John a brick in the nose", since such sentences might better be retained by students. To exemplify how semantic values don't change but syntactic categories can shift, I have used the sentence:

Elizabeth kissed John hard on the lips with a brick.

In this sentence Elizabeth always has agentive value, John affected value and with a brick instrumental value no matter how the syntax is reconstucted.

John was kissed hard with a brick (by Elizabeth).
A brick kissed hard on John's lips.

A favorite theme for illustrating this point about semantic stability as opposed to syntactic shift is my daughter story in which I tell about a kicking incident between my tiny daughter and her much taller brother. For me to discover the truth of the incident required running through an entire series of syntactic shifts from "Nick hurt himself" through "He's a jerk anyway" to "My foot slipped" to "I kicked him hard with my foot."

Often student academic experience can be brought to bear with a sentence that cannot exist outside a particular academic context. The personified term The wall in the sentence "It was the wall with whom I made friends" does not fit the context unless it is followed by "My name is

Bartleby", after the Melville story which so many students have read. Their knowledge of and amusement over the use of the "Bartleby" story will induce them to remember the example and its grammatical import.

Thematic association, in which an instructor derives examples from a humorous theme established at the beginning of the semester, can be especially effective in the grammar class. Among the themes I have used, my weight, my car, my family, my dog walking and my colleagues have proved interesting. As the students knew, I once owned a twelve year old Renault station wagon, pink, and much in need of body work. We called it Pink Panter, since it usually panted its way into the college parking lot, usually dragging bottom as well, another source of numerous punning examples. Pink had had four accidents in one year -- two with no one in the car; so it was a car of much character, or its driver was. The opening "My car has had another accident" easily built into "My car has suffered another accident", "the car is suffering terribly", etc. to illustrate how words shift from one category or sub-category to another and how alternative syntactic patterns could communicate a similar message. By relying on the "car" theme, I have been able to explain a number of difficult semantic concepts like sense and reference. In opening a class on adjective reference, I might say "Frank has bought a new car; to what does new refer?" If new refers to the car, then the car must be a 1992 Dodge, Plymouth or Ford. But if in fact I have bought a 1949 Studebaker, the new obviously refers to the car being new for me rather than being new itself. Stories about the real 1949 Studebaker, and about my first car, the '49 Ford, help reinforce the adjective reference. As for dog stories, "The dog took me for a walk again" opens a discussion of necessary adverbial adjuncts, while "The dog had my shoes for lunch and two phones for dessert" facilitates discussion both of adverbial or adjectival modification as well as of causitive verbs. A favorite thematic example is to use colleagues. One British professor in particular was notorious for his British behavior and an obvious target of wit. I'm told he used me in his own examples. To illustrate how negation is carried across the sentence, I have found no better example than "No one has ever seen John Oakland smile". And I would follow this with "It's not because John is naturally sour" with all the stress variations of BECAUSE, BECAUSE and NATURALLY, SOUR, NATURALLY alone. My wife, who is a beautiful, poised, sophisticated, cosmopolitan and brilliant academic, used to lecture poetry and drama to the same students I had for grammar. I often opened a lecture on anaphora with the sentences "My wife has decided to buy a truck. It is a huge truck of the variety the British call a Landrover". The underlying associations were never lost on the guffawing students; and I was always warned never to do it again. The following week I would open the lecture with "She has decided against the truck which she fears would not fit her image. Must have been the color". Finally, dieting has been one of my success stories as far as syntactic exemplification is concerned if not actual weight loss. Verb form differences, adverbials, prepositions, and even preposition-conjunction correspondence can be easily illustrated with "I met an interesting sandwich at lunch. It has been speaking to me since lunch." Stative and dynamic can readily be illustrated by "I am gaining weight", "*I am being heavy this week", "I often diet".

Even sentence pairs, long used to indicate syntactic and semantic contrasts, can be effectively turned into chuckle inducing quips. The ambiguous "He called me a waiter" comfortably transfers into ditransitive "He called a waiter for me", monotransitive "He said I was a filty waiter", as well as a number of improbables. One former colleague was quite a master at risque sentence pairs as the ambiguous

a. He turned on the light.
b. He turned on his wife.

indicates. In the pair

a. Only fools drive dilapidated Pink Renaults.
b. Lonely fools drive dilapidated Pink Renaults.

Only and Lonely need to be distinguisted as modifiers; but the humor associated with a prior theme can extend student interest to an aspect of modification which might otherwise be thought dull.

Terminological definition is often the downfall of the otherwise good grammarian. How to explain so that students can contrast similar or often confused concepts is particularly difficult. Again, humorous exemplification can be the key. To distinguish stative from dynamic, in particular, I have opposed the sentences "I am having mice in my closet" and "I have mice in my closet." Having does exist in a sentence like "I am having a party" to indicate a limited duration event. By explaining "I am having mice in my closet for a party. There will be an open bar, cat belly dancers, and special cheesecake...", I am often able to provide a solid test example for students to measure other stative forms against.

Playing the buffoon can provide opportunity for extended exemplification of seemingly easy topics that students too often bumble, the non-finite verb for instance. I like to rely on my weight thematically joined examples to illustrate the type and application of the non-finite verb.

a. It would take a huge crane to lift Frank.
b. The entire class could not succeed in lifting Frank.
c. To lift Frank is an impossible task.
d. Lifting Frank is an arduous task.
e. I hate lifting Frank.
f. We'd like Frank lifted.
g. It is nearly impossible to lift Frank after lunch.
h. Being lifted is Frank's dream.
i. We need help lifting Frank.
j. We need help to lift Frank.
k. Although it nearly killed us, we helped lift Frank.
l. Peggy wanted Frank to be lifted off her leg.
m. It is heavy work to lift/lifting Frank.
n. It is not easy lifting Frank.
o. The bottom line, to lift Frank, was agreed by the senate.
p. We all prayed for a well-lifted Frank.
q. Having been lifted, Frank rose to the occasion.
r. Being lifted increased Frank's weight.
s. Frank's weight always increased being lifted.
t. To be lifted, Frank ordered two cranes.
u. Frank, being lifted, became weightless.
v. We love Frank weightless.

As the examples indicate, a full range of non-finite verb types from To infinitives to ing and ed forms, to bare infinitives can be clearly illustrated by paralleled sentences which derive from one thematic base. And as the ripples of laughter stretch less widely across the classroom, it is obvious that the illustration has had its full effect.

Concepts like indirect object can be not only solidified but also extensively investigated for the student mind by using an example like "After she was finished with him, Jenny gave Robert to Jane." The sentence demands discussion since societal disgust with slavery makes the sentence ungrammatical unless Robert is a child or some metaphorical condition pertains. The humor the sentence engenders however, whether this derives from feminist awareness or from a reversal of conventional roles, leads the students to wish to discuss grammatical principles and to remember the example.

Jokes and other funny texts are often dependent on grammatical relationship for their punchline effect. As I was writing this paragraph, an electrical storm caused a power outage in my building and obliterated two hours work. A colleague rushed into my office to announce a tornado watch was in effect. Tomato watch sounded intriguing. Feeling disgusted about my two hour loss, I rushed to the window to watch the tomatoes, who, unfortunately, had disappeared indoors because of the storm. Immediately I returned to my work station to watch my computer screen instead and wonder how a tomato of a machine could be so crass as to crash during an overblown tomato watch. After a suitable period of mourning for my lost text, I glanced at my wrist and realized I had forgotten my watch at home anyway. Tornado watch becoming tomato watch obviously depends on lexical and semantic shift. Nevertheless, it is the rhythmic grammatical structure underlying the series of puns that allows for the lexical and semantic shifts to occur at meaning level. The shift in meanings

depends entirely on the fact of tomato having either noun or adjective function and watch having noun or verbal function. Furthermore, the varying semantic structures hold together because of the rythmic intonation in the modifictional structures of English nominal phrases.

Comic strip speech texts, included extensively in college textbooks to illustrate points even of grammar, are useful both because they spark student interest and often contain interesting points of syntax in addition to explicit commentary on grammatical concepts. One need not rely only on the comic strips in text books for analysis. Daily newspaper strips often contain examples fit for the day's specific grammar lesson whether the teacher prefers a traditional, a descriptive, a transformational, or even a more theoretical grammatical system. A recent "For Better or Worse" episode centered on the prescriptive school grammar distinction between can and may. "Cathy" episodes often depict the main character using drawn out sentences, spread often over three frames of the strip, to lead to the short punchline. Inevitably these drawn out texts feature elaborate verb and verbal patterns which allow for illustration of progressives and perfects, of gerunds, participles and infinitives. The "Blondie" episode of May 12, 1992 uses auxilliary forms may and could in frames two and three to anticipate the punchline in frame four. A "Doonesbury" strip text, which appeared immediately after the Los Angeles riots, used a series of adverbials in frames one through three to build suspense and tension that burst into the punchline of frame four. Without the sequenced adverbials, the text would have had little meaning. Call it foregrounding, stylistic enhancement, syntactic shift, or grammatical sequencing; the repeated grammatic adverbial patterns prepare the reader for the punchline.

Since the strips attempt to mimic colloquial speech, they often employ a repetitive syntactic pattern which analyzes as the key to the humor. In the April 4, 1992 "Walnut Cove", third frame statement "You just don't like the idea of him having fun without you, Lori" is repeated as punchline "No, I just don't like the idea of him having fun." It is funny because the same syntactic pattern just slightly shortened conveys a different yet apposite meaning. Use of locative there in the "Hagar the Horrible" episode of 12 May 1992 ties text directly to visual clues in the frame, a relationship rare outside oral speech. Locative there, because it is tied to visual clues and activities, exists almost exclusively in speech texts. Strips, if they do nothing else, tie the spoken grammar of everyday conversation to drawn visual interaction. When Hobbes calls TV watching "remedial vegetation" in the April 2, 1992 "Calvin and Hobbes", the same rhythmic considerations as those in "tomato watch" provide a grammatical bonding that creates the association with "remedial education" for the reader. "Remedial vegetation" is humorous because it takes advantage of the intonation patterns associated with specific syllable combinations, but it also generates laughter by milking the stress combinations possible within the limited confines of an English modificational phrase. It can be interesting for students to discover that their own punning and wit often turns on a point of grammar.

Although it is the case that comic strips are a mixed media in which humor often appears to be more visually or lexically than syntactically based, close analysis of the text will inevitably reveal some degree of underlying grammatical strength which makes the oun work. Likewise, even the stress pattern, orality and accent basis for spoken jokes can be shown to have some anchoring point in syntactic relationships. If humor is so tied to grammar, obviously humorous texts should be used to teach grammar.

Perhaps we grammar teachers ought to consider whether we are taking ourselves, and our subject, too seriously. If the subject matter of what we do underscores the humor we all enjoy, perhaps we should work to connect the two for our students, and for ourselves as well.

Grammatical Competence and the Teaching of Grammar

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1.0. Introduction.

A constant for teachers of basic writers is the recurrence of sentence level errors in student writing. No teacher will deny that students who write essays with fewer sentence level errors will be more successful than students who write essays with more errors, but no consensus exists on how to remedy sentence level errors. On the one hand, there are teachers who believe that the least effective method of improving student writing is the teaching of formal grammar. Many cite the forceful conclusion of Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer (1963):

> In view of the widespread agreement of research studies based upon many types of students teachers, the conclusion can be stated in strong and unqualified terms: the teaching of formal grammar has a negligible or, because it usually displaces some instruction and practice in composition, even a harmful effect on improvement in writing. (p. 37-38)

On the other hand, there are teachers who have a very pragmatic motivation for focusing on sentence level error. Hairston (1981) found that some sentential errors are heavily stigmatized by the prospective employers of our students. She concludes:

> [W]e [English teachers] cannot afford to let students leave our classrooms thinking that surface features of discourse do not matter. They do. (p. 799)

We propose an approach to teaching grammar that exploits the student's linguistic competence, that is, her tacit knowledge of her native language. To make clearer what such an approach involves, it is useful to contrast it with cognitive based approaches of the kind advocated by Harris and Rowan (1989) and Laster (1990) which assume that grammar is a learned body of knowledge. Given this assumption, what is clearly needed to help students to mastery of grammar is a better teaching methodology. Both Harris and Rowan and Laster propose a methodology based on general learning strategies suggested by research in cognitive science.

We disagree with this approach because it fails to distinguish between types of knowledge. In the last 35 years, linguistic theory has developed the competence vs. performance distinction. Competence refers to the native speaker's tacit knowledge of his language while performance refers to how a native speaker puts his linguistic knowledge to use.

From the critical perspective allowed by linguistic theory, the problem of cognitive approaches is that they confuse competence and

performance. These approaches treat grammar as they would tread any other subject area. For example, Laster (p. 23) claims that the concept of "sentence" "is a process of construction across the grade levels, where the initial pattern grows through more and more sophisticated examples into a concept-model that truly represents its complexities." It follows from this claim that students must be taught what a sentence is and that successful teaching strategies are those that move from simple to complex, highlite salient features, etc.

Our position is that cognitive approaches of the type advocated by Laster and Harris and Rowan are not efficient methods for teaching grammar. We believe they are unnecessary and will be unduly difficult for many, if not most, students. Cognitive approaches to teaching grammar fail to recognize that native speakers of school age and above already know their grammar. The fact that they can speak and interpret utterances in their native language is strong evidence that they know their grammar by virtue of being native speakers.

For this reason, it is counterproductive to have students learn grammar - regardless of the methodological sophistication - as if it were unknown material. Instead, a more sensible approach to the teaching of grammar is one in which students are taught how to operationalize their linguistic competence in order to solve problems of linguistic performance. Within this approach, the task of the teacher is to discern through error analysis the relationship between unacceptable performance (i.e., error) and linguistic competence. On the basis of this analysis, the teacher can introduce correction and revision techniques that utilize the student's linguistic competence. Not only is this approach an efficient pedagogy, as students address performance problems using knowledge that they already have, but it also is an empowering pedagogy because it disconfirms their fear that they are not knowers of the language - a fear unwittingly propogated by other approaches to teaching grammar.

The approach we advocate also has the virtue of introducing a minimum of grammatical jargon. Technical discussions of grammar are not relevant to the student (although, of course, they are to the grammarian) and they probably are why many students are intimidated by the very notion of grammar. Hartwell (1985), in his discussion of the term "grammar," observes that grammatical descriptions in school grammars are often very unclear. In fact, because of their dependence on heavy grammatical jargon, they are "clear only if known" - or COIK.

For instance, consider how fragments are presented in Lunsford and Connors (1989), *The St. Martin's Handbook*, a grammar handbook for use at the college level. They define a sentence as

> . . . a grammatically complete group of words that expresses a complete thought. To be grammatically complete a group of words must contain two major structural components -- a subject and a predicate. The subject identifies what the sentence is about and the predicate asserts or asks something about the subject, or tells the subject to do something. (p 138)

Using this definition, Lunsford and Connors define sentence fragments as "groups of words punctuated as sentences but lacking some element grammatically necessary to a sentence, usually either a subject or a finite verb" (p. 265). To check for fragments, Lunsford and Connors suggest that students make sure that any sentence they write meet the following three criteria:

1) It must have a subject.
2) It must have a finite verbs, not just a verbal.
3) Unless it is a question, it must have at least one clause that does not begin with a subordinating word. (p 266)

One thing this definition shows is that the notion of a "complete thought" is different from being grammatically complete. Moreover, even if we ignore the change in terminology, this account is a good example of COIK. The entire prescription presupposes a knowledge of subject, predicate, finite verb, and subordinating word. And, of course, Connors and Lunsford do not propose any guidelines for recognizing complete thoughts.

Their assumption is that any string of words that is grammaticaly complete will also be a complete thought. But all writing teachers know that the notion of 'complete thought' as a guideline for detecting fragments is notoriously ineffective.

In the following sections of this paper, we will first consider the basic amount of knowledge that students need to know about the structure of English. This discussion will be based on the twenty most common errors in college writing as found by Connors and Lunsford (1986) as well as Hairston's (1981) study of errors most stigmatized by professionals. We will show the extent to which these errors relate to basic knowledge of English that a writer would need to detect and diagnose the error and then to correct it. Then we will compare our analysis of the grammatical knowledge that writers need to detect and correct the sentence errors of fragments, run-ons, and comma splices to the school grammar presentation of these points in *The St. Martin's Handbook*, Lunsford and Connors (1989) and in Warriner's (1986).

2.0. Error Analyses.

One of the ways to decide how much grammar to teach is to consider the typical kinds of errors that students make and how stigmatized those errors are. Connors and Lunsford (1986) surveyed the types of errors made in 3000 college essays written in the United States. On the basis of their survey, they listed the twenty most frequently made errors. This list, presented as Figure 1 below, also presented in the introduction to the *St. Martin's Handbook* (Lunsford and Connors, 1988), is given in the order of error frequency. (It should be noted that the most frequent errors were actually spelling mistakes, but those were not counted.)

This narrowing of important error types is indeed useful because it brings some order into the problem of error remediation, a task often bewildering for both teacher and student. Closer examination of this list, however, reveals that the types of error can be reduced still further. In Figure 2 below, we suggest five categories of error, the criteria of our classification being the grammatical knowledge necessary to detect and correct the errors. (Number after the listing is the ranking of the error.)

1. No comma after introductory element
2. Vague pronoun reference
3. No comma in compound sentence
4. Wrong word
5. No comma in non-restrictive element
6. Wrong/missing inflected endings
7. Wrong or missing preposition
8. Comma splice
9. Possessive apostrophe error
10. Tense shift
11. Unnecessary shift in person
12. Sentence fragment
13. Wrong tense or verb form
14. Subject-verb agreement
15. Lack of comma in series
16. Pronoun agreement error
17. Unnecessary comma with restrictive element
18. Run-on or fused sentence
19. Dangling or misplaced modifier
20. Its/it's error

Error Frequence: Connors and Lunsford (1986)

Figure 1

Hairston (1981) surveyed the reactions of a variety of business professionals to a number of sentential errors. To record their judgements, Hairston used a three point scale (does not bother me, bothers me a little, bothers me a lot). In Figure 3 below, we have listed those errors in the three most serious categories Hairston used (status marking, very serious errors, serious) within our grouping of the errors that Connors and Lunsford (1986) found.

It is important to remember that Hairston's method elicited reactions to a single sentence without any other context. Hairston had very few sentences which tested reaction to the same type of error.

The classifications we offer in Figure 2 and

I. Recognition of independent clauses
   a. comma in compound sentences (3)
   b. comma splice (8)
   c. sentence fragment (12)
   d. run-on or fused sentence (18)
   e. inappropriate punctuation with connecting words

II. Recognition of subject and verb
   a. no comma after introductory element (1)
   b. wrong/missing inflected endings (6)
   c. tense shift (10)
   d. wrong tense or verb form (13)
   e. subject-verb agreement

III. Recognition of modification relations
   a. dangling (participial) modifiers (19)

IV. Grammatically distinguishable homonyms and/or misused structure words
   a. wrong word-i.e., "their/there" (4)
   b. its/it's (20)

V. Errors not remediable by accessing grammatical knowledge
   a. no comma in non-restrictive element (5)
   b. Unnecessary comma with restrictive element (17)
   c. wrong or missing preposition (7)
   d. possessive apostrophe error (9)
   e. lack of comma in series (15)
   f. vague pronoun reference (2)
   g. unnecessary shift in person (4)
   h. pronoun agreement error (16)

Connors and Lunsford (1986) classed according to grammatical source of error

Figure 2

Figure 3 are useful for both students and teachers for two reasons. First, they simplify the approach to error by specifying the basic grammatical knowledge needed to detect and correct many errors. Each of the errors in categories I - IV can be detected through application of simple operational tests such as forming tag questions or yes-no tions,

I. Recognition of independent clauses
   a. sentence fragments (very serious)
   b. run-on sentences (very serious)

II. Recognition of subject-verb
   a. Lack of subject-verb agreement: *We was* instead of *we were* (status marking)
   b. Lack of subject-verb agreement that did not use the wrong form of an auxiliary (very serious)
   c. tense shifting (serious)
   d. insertion of comma between the verb and its complement (very serious)

III. Recognition of modification relations
   a. dangling modifiers (serious)

IV. Grammatically distinguishable homonyms and/or misused structure words
   a. Objective pronouns as subject: *Him and Richard were the last ones hired.* (status marking)
   b. *I* as an objective pronoun (serious)

V. Errors not remediable by accessing grammatical knowledge
   a. double negatives (status marking)
   b. nonstardard verb forms in past or past participle: *had went* instead of *had gone*.
   c. noncapitalization of proper nouns (very serious)
   d. *would of* instead of *would have* (very serious)
   e. non-parallelism (very serious)
   f. faulty adverb forms: *bad* for *badly* (very serious)
   g. use of *set* for intransitive *sit* (very serious)
   h. predication errors: *the intimidates hiring* (serious)
   i. lack of commas to set off interrupters like *however* (serious)
   j. lack of commas in a series (serious)
   k. use of plural modifiers with a singular noun: *These kind of errors* (serious)

Comparison of Hairston (1981) with Connors and Lunsford (1986)

Figure 3

which we discuss later in this paper. This narrowing of error types is useful because it simplifies the revision process, at least insofar as sentence level grammar is concerned. Flower et al. (1986) outline a cognitive model of revising that represents three "hurdles" for beginning writers. First, they must detect the error; second, they must diagnose the problem; third, they select a strategy for revision. If we limit our notion of revision to only sentence level error, the simple operational tests that we will propose allow students to detect and diagnose many errors on their own; all that it is needed is increased awareness of their own tacit grammatical knowledge. The third "hurdle" of selecting a revision strategy can then be more efficiently undertaken with their understanding of what was "wrong" in the first place.

And second, this classification provides a well defined starting point for teachers as they address errors most likely to draw sanction upon students by professionals outside academics.

3.0. Fragments , run-ons, and comma splices from the perspective of school grammars.

Before considering our proposals for showing students how to use their own tacit knowledge of English grammar, it important to understand how difficult it is to apply traditional explanations of the sentence and clause to the problems of fragments, run-ons, and comma splices.

We have already considered the definition of the sentence in Lunsford and Connors' (1989) handbook. Not much different from that definition is the one from Warriner's (1986), a rhetoric and grammar text for the 10th grade.

> A sentence is a group of words containing a subject and verb and expressing a complete thought. (p. 25)

On the next page, the handbook notes the following parts of a sentence.

> A sentence consists of two parts: the subject and the predicate. The subject of the sentence is the part about with [sic] something is being said. The predicate is the part that says something about the subject. (p. 36)

Using these definitions, we can predict the definition of a sentence fragment.

> A sentence fragment is a group of words that does not express a complete thought. Since it is always a part of a sentence, it would not be allowed to stand by itself, but should be in the sentence of which it is a part. (p 269)

It is important to realize that all of these explanations are followed by exercises which ask students to identify the relevant structures. Neither Lunsford and Connors (1989) or Warriner (1986) provides any operational tests for deciding what the subject, predicate or complete thought is.

For some types of run-on sentences and sentence fragments, students must be able to recognize whether the group of words that they have written is headed by a coordinating or a subordinating conjunction. Both Lunsford and Connors (1989) and Warriner (1986) suggest that this classification of conjunctions is ad hoc. For the definition of coordinating conjunctions, both actually list the relevant words.

> Coordinating conjunctions (*and, but, nor, for, so, yet*) join equivalent structures -- two or more nouns, pronouns, verbs, . . . or clauses. *Nor, for* and *so* can connect independent clauses only. (Lunsford and Connors, 1989, p. 148)

> Conjunctions that join equal parts of a sentence are called coordinating conjunctions. They are *and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet*. (Warriner, 1986, p 26)

Both of these grammars offer similar definitions for subordinating conjunctions.

> Subordinating conjunctions introduce dependent clauses and signal relationships between that clause and another clause, usually an independent clause. . . . (Lunsford and Connors, 1989, p. 149)

> Adverb clauses are introduced by subordinating

> conjunctions. As its name suggests, a subordinating conjunction makes its clause a subordinating part of the sentence -- a part that cannot stand alone. Warriner, 1986, p. 102)

After both definitions, a list follows of subordinating conjunctions.[1] Much more useful information could be given to students. As we will show in the next section, coordinating and subordinating conjunctions have different syntactic properties that every native speaker knows.[2]

4.0. Using students' tacit knowledge to address fragments, run-ons, and comma splices.

Recently, a few studies have addressed the issue of formal grammar teaching from the perspective of modern linguistics. These studies have stressed how students can be taught operational definitions for important grammatical concepts.

Most notable of these are DeBeaugrande (1984) and Noguchi (1991). DeBeaugrande seeks to answer the question of why the study of school grammar fails to help students reduce sentence level errors. He places the blame on the inadequacies of school grammars, clearly illustrating how their grammatical descriptions are either too vague or too technical. For example, the traditional (semantic) definition of a noun as a person, place, or thing is unworkably vague because it applies very uneasily to words such as "arrival," which is better defined as a noun in terms of its morphology, rather than in terms of its meaning. School grammar accounts of the notion of "subject" and "predicate" tend to be unworkably technical. For instance, a "subject" may be defined as a noun or noun phrase which governs the finite verb of the predicate. To apply such a definition to his own language use, a student would have to know beforehand what a predicate is, not to mention what a finite verb is (p. 258).

For such reasons, DeBeaugrande charges that school grammars are not at all "basic" and therefore do not meet the needs of basic writers. This charge, we claim, is easily supported by the school grammar examples we have cited earlier. He seeks to develop a truly basic grammar - one whose descriptions and guidelines contain a minimum of jargon, one whose suggestions are "operational," that is, stated in sets of clearly defined steps, and one which draws directly from a student's tacit grammatical knowledge. DeBeaugrande suggests several such grammatical descriptions and guidelines which address common sentence level problems - identification of subject and verb and the recognition of clause structure. We will consider the issue of clause structure recognition here and suggest approaches to teaching it.

4.1. Recognition of Clause Structure

Errors resulting from inadequate recognition of clause structure rank both among the most common and the most stigmatized of sentence miscues. In fact, comma splices, run-ons, and fragments are in Connors and Lunsford's list and they figure prominently in Hairston's survey. According to Hairston, professionals judge sentence fragments and run-ons as "very serious" and comma splices as "moderately serious." Below are given the five errors whose detection and correction is primarily dependent on recognition of clause structure, presented earlier in Figure 2.

a. no comma in compound sentence (3)
b. comma splice (8)
c. sentence fragment (12)
d. run-on sentence
e. inappropriate punctuation with connecting words

4.1.1. Clause structure and connecting words

In the above outtake from Figure 2, the domains of error "a" - no comma in compound sentence - and error "e" - inappropriate punctuation with connecting words have considerable

overlap. Both are concerned with connecting words and with punctuation conventions between clauses joined with connecting words. If a student feels uneasy about two strings of words joined with connecting words, she must determine the clause structure and also the category of connecting words, which could be either a subordinating conjunction, a coordinating conjunction, or a logical connector (i.e., *therefore*, *however*, *instead*). One approach to this task is to memorize lists of each category of connecting word and then memorize the sentence types associated with each category. For instance, a subordinating conjunction introduces a dependent clause, a coordinating conjunction introduces an independent clause as do logical connectors. Students then learn the punctuation conventions associated with each category.

Indeed, this is the traditional approach and is recommended by the two handbooks we have discussed. (See section 3.0. above). But such an approach fails many students because they confuse the categories. An alternative approach would rely not on memorization of lists but instead on bringing into awareness the grammatical knowledge of connecting words that they already possess. The main task for the student is to determine the clause structure and the category of connecting word. Because students, as native speakers, already know the syntactic behavior of dependent and independent clauses, they can use this knowledge to test problematic strings. Dependent clauses do not have a fixed position in the sentence; they can be either string initial or embedded in the string. Independent clauses, on the other hand, have fixed positions in the sentence.

(1) **Although** it was too difficult for him, John worked hard to pass the test.
(1a.) John worked hard to pass the test, **although** it was too hard for him.
(2) John worked hard to pass the test, **but** it was too difficult for him.
(2a) ***But** it was too difficult for him, John worked hard to pass the test.
(3) John worked hard to pass the test; **however**, it was too difficult for him.
(3a) ***Howe er**, it was too difficult for him; John worked hard to pass the test.

Thus, one simple test can reveal whether a particular string of words is dependent or independent. If it is dependent and introduces the sentence, then it can be set off from the rest of the sentence with a comma. On the other hand, if the strings are discovered to be independent, then it remains to be ascertained whether the connecting word is a logical connector or a coordinating conjunction. Because these types of connectors have a different distribution within the clause, students can easily identify them with a simple test. Coordinating conjunctions cannot move within the clause while logical connectors can.

(4) John worked hard to pass the test, **but** it was too difficult for him
(4a) *John worked hard to pass the test, it was too difficult for him **but**.
(5) John worked hard to pass the test; **however**, it was too difficult for him.
(5a) John worked hard to pass the test; it was too difficult for him, **however**.

If the connecting word cannot move, then the student knows that it is a coordinating conjunction and can precede it with a comma. On the other hand, if the connecting word can move, then the student knows that it is a logical connector and he can insert the appropriate punctuation.[3]

Another grammatical strategy to determine the clause structure of strings containing connecting words is the use of the tag question (Noguchi 1991) and yes-no question test (DeBeaugrande 1984). If a string of words containing a connecting word yields one question, then it consists of an independent clause conjoined to dependent material and the connecting word is a subordinating conjunction.

(6) John worked hard to pass the test **although** it was too difficult for him.
(6a) Did John work hard to pass the test?
(6b) ***Although** was it too difficult for him?
(6c) John worked hard to pass the test, didn't he?
(6d) ***Although** it was too difficult for him,

wasn't it?

On the other hand, if the string of words yields two questions, then it consists of two independent clauses.

(7) John worked hard to pass the test; **however**, it was too difficult for him.
(7a) Did John work hard to pass the test?
(7b) **However**, was it too difficult for him?
(7c) John worked hard to pass the test, didn't he?
(7d) **However**, it was too difficult for him, wasn't it?

At this point, having established the clause structure, the student can apply the movement test illustrated above in (4) and (5) to determine if the connecting word is a coordinating conjunction or a logical connector.

Still another way that tag questions are useful for distinguishing between dependent and independent clauses is that they identify the subject of the independent clause.

(8). The test was too hard.
(8a). The test was too hard, wasn't it?

Tag questions can be used to identify the subject because the pronoun in the tag always refers to the main subject. They are also useful for identifying independent clauses because, as was stated earlier, like yes-no questions, tag questions work only on independent clauses of genuine declarative sentences.

(9) Before John washes the car.
(9a). *Before John washes the car, doesn't he?

Tag questions copy either the auxiliary verb of the independent clause, the appropriate form of *do*, or *be* if it is the main verb , and then reverse the negative/affirmative value of the main verb, facts which can be used to determine which of two clauses is the main clause.

(10) Before John washes the car. He should check the weather report.
(10a). * Before John washes the car, he should check the weather report, doesn't he?
(10b). Before John washes the car, he should check the weather report, shouldn't he?

These sentences illustrate how tag questions are an effective test for identifying main clauses because students can readily see that the copied auxiliary refers to the auxiliary of the second string, marking that string as the independent clause. As we will show in the next section, yes/no questions and tag questions are important operational tests that students can use for correcting the most common errors found by Connors and Lunsford (1986) and the stigmatized errors identified by Hairston (1981).

4.1.2. Comma splice, run-on sentences, and fragments

Comma splices and run-on sentences are similar errors, the one difference being that a comma splice separates two independent clauses with only a comma while a run-on sentence has no punctuation at all between independent clauses. A fragment is a string of words punctuated as a separate sentence but which is not a complete sentence. These errors are very stigmatized and student writers of these errors are sometimes condemned as not being able to think clearly or logically or not understanding what a sentence is. Of course, both charges are ludicrous because students write more correctly punctuated sentences than incorrect ones. Moreover, in the case of fragments, both spoken and written language (i.e., the language of advertising) are filled with them. The difficulty for students lies in identifying independent clauses. If they are given the means of identifying independent clauses, they should be able to detect and then correct comma splices, run-ons, and fragments.

The question tests operate efficiently to identify independent clauses. Consider the comma splices and run-on sentences below and the tests performed on them.

(11) *Jeff and Maria bought a house, it needed a lot of work.
(11a) Did Jeff and Maria buy a house?
(11b) Did it need a lot of work?
(11c) *Did Jeff and Maria buy a house, it needed a lot of work?
(11d) *Jeff and Maria bought a house, did it need a lot of work?
(11e) Jeff and Maria bought a house, didn't they?
(11f) It needed a lot of work, didn't it?
(11g) *Jeff and Maria bought a house, it needed a lot of work, didn't it?
(11h) *Jeff and Maria bought a house, it needed a lot or work didn't they?
(12) Tom rushed to the airport his flight was late.
(12a) Did Tom rush to the airport?
(12b) Was his flight late?
(12c) *Did Tom rush to the airport his flight was late?
(12d) *Tom rushed to the airport was his flight late?
(12e) Tom rushed to the airport, didn't he?
(12f) His flight was late, wasn't it?
(12g) *Tom rushed to the airport his flight was late, didn't he?
(12h) *Tom rushed to the airport his flight was late, wasn't it?

These tests are easily performed by students because all native speakers have fully learned how to form tag questions and yes-no questions. Once the clause structure has been uncovered, students can then insert the appropriate punctuation.

Turning now to fragments, what is needed is a conscious awareness of what constitutes an independent clause. As is the case with comma splices and run-ons, students can use the question tests to identify fragments. These tests will fail on non-independent clauses. In fact, by definition, a fragment is a string of words which will not yield a tag question or a yes-no question.

(13) *Which will work best for students.
(13a) *Which will work best for students, won't it?
(13b) *Will which work best for students?
(14) *Because it rains every time.
(14a) *Because it rains every time, doesn't it?
(14b) *Because does it rain every time?

In cases like (14a), where students might think that the tag question is grammatical because it matches a common speech pattern, the yes-no question serves as a conclusive test.

5.0. Conclusion

We believe that students must be taught some grammar because it is important for their academic and professional success that they limit the number of errors that they make. Based on the most recent inventory of errors in a random sampling of college composition (Connors and Lunsford, 1986) and professional business people's reaction to certain types of sentential errors (Hairston, 1981), we have suggested that the minimum grammar to be taught must include recognizing independent clauses, subject and verb, modifier relationship, and certain confusions among homonyms and that are structure words. In this paper, limiting our discussion to notions of clause structure and sentence completeness, we have tried to show how to make conscious the tacit knowledge that native speakers of English have relevant to these notions and how this knowledge can be utilized to detect and correct related performance errors.

In addition, we believe that the application of general learning strategies such as the congitivist pedagogies advocated by Harris and Rowan (1989) and Laster (1990) is fundamentally misguided. These approaches assume that English grammar is like mathematics, history, biology, etc. Our central claim is that students know what sentences are in English, but that the definitions of sentences in traditional grammar do not allow them to access that knowledge.

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[1]The one good aspect of both these definitions is that the use of a subordinating conjunction makes the clause dependent. There is nothing inherently dependent about any finite clause until it is headed by a subordinating conjunction.

[2]It is interesting to observe that Lunsford and Connors (1986) note the different syntactic properties of conjunctive adverbs like **however, nevertheless, therefore**, etc:

Conjunctive adverbs connect one independent clause (or sentence) to another. . . . Like many other adverbs and unlike other conjunctions, they can be moved to different positions in a clause without changing or disrupting the meaning of the clause. Look at the following sentences:

a. The cider tasted bitter; **however**, each of us drank a tall glass of it.

b. The cider tasted bitter; each of us, **however**, drank a tall glass of it.

c. The cider tasted bitter; each of us drank a tall glass it, **however**. (p. 149)

[3]Reynolds (1983), a text for basic writers, presents these three types of coordination in the way we have discussed. She even labels them with the punctuation that they require: comma connectors are coordinating conjuctions; two-place connectors are subordinating conjuctions; semicolon connectors are conjunctive adverbs.

About Computational Tools in the Teching of Grammar and Writing

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Some of us remember those times when we said, "Computers? For writing? For teaching? For learning? They're a fad. They'll go away." Well, if we take our heads out of the sand long enough to look, we might discover the truth. And today again I hear, "Grammar checkers? They don't work. Look at all the mistakes they make! Look at all the wrong advice they give! They'll never catch on." And back into the sand it goes! So, I want to convince you that (1) grammar checkers are a force to be reckoned with, the first step being to understand them; and (2) a variety of other computational tools can enhance teaching and learning.

The reputation of grammar checkers has grown perhaps even faster than their capabilities. At my school, many a colleague worries about the "fairness" of letting students use computers when they write their final essay, one which two readers will evaluate holistically. A colleague pointed out with eyebrows raised in alarm, "You know, they [the wild-eyed techno-freaks of the PC Lab, presumably] even have GRAMMAR checkers and spell checkers." The implication was clearly that such inappropriate help would topple Justitia and eradicate the art of composition instruction. As I was well aware, the colleague who uttered this warning had never been within five feet of a computer. On the other hand, some colleagues---particularly from other than English departments--have seriously suggested giving students a copy of a grammar checker and dispensing with the introductory writing course.

I have also heard similarly confident statements from students with access to their own computing devices, "Composition, huh? No sweat! I have a grammar checker!" You will not always hear the comment at that same level of openness; you may hear, "I have a computer. May I word process my assignment?" Look for the slightly suppressed, victorious smile that says, "I got you!" With the contemporary, ever more computer-literate student, you had best be better prepared than to answer, "You'd be cheating, Johnny." Or, "Grammar checkers are not reliable (good, always right, often mistaken, etc.)" Or, "No, you may not use your computer." I am convinced that grammar checkers will change, will improve, and will remain on the hard drives of many a computer user. The sooner teachers of writing and grammar understand grammar checkers, the sooner they can integrate this software--which computer-literate students will use anyway--into the learning process constructively--which computer-literate students will probably not be able to do on their own.

So, let me stress: Any one statement about grammar checkers must occur among equally clear statements about the capabilities of computing devices and the current state of text processing. And here is that reminder: Basically, computing devices can merely add and compare patterns; any other jobs that computing devices appear to do are derived from or emulated by addition and comparison.[1] Grammar checkers, then, are limited to comparing patterns. If a certain pattern, increases the likelihood of writing-error X to have occurred, then the grammar checker will flash a warning and some advice. In other words, grammar checkers must rely only on structure and not on meaning to

make their comments. Let me illustrate:

In such a structure-based grammar, restrictive and non-restrictive relative-pronoun clauses are indistinguishable. The grammarian must resort to an analysis of meaning to determine that "Schliepers, who sat by the window, saw the accident" is likely to contain a non-restrictive clause and that "Students who sat by the window saw the accident" contains a restrictive clause. Since the proper name "Schliepers" is structurally indistinguishable from the common noun "Students," a grammar checker could not give reliable advice. At the same time, you must realize that if the memory of computers is large enough to hold a complete dictionary of English nouns in quickly accessible memory-registers, the grammar checker might offer acceptable advice because--checking the dictionary--it has found no entry "Schliepers," has placed that word into the "proper name" category, and can now offer the advice, "'Schliepers' is probably a name. If 'who' introduces a non-restrictive relative clause, you may need a comma."

Let me give you another example of a simple rule for a grammar checker. I want to concentrate on the identification of passive verb phrases, an ability that illustrates well the improvement of the software:

I use the asterisk here as a "wild card," to mean "any group of letters." This grammar checker will pop up the advice for all the following structures:

- is read
- is filled
- is and [will be]
- is red

It will not pop up the advice for structures such as:

- is almost filled
- is not read
- is gone
- is burnt

Of course, it will also ignore variant be-verbs. "Was burnt" will be as ignored as "will have been filled." Interestingly enough, GRAMMATIK II had about this level of sophistication, although it also checked for the various tense forms of the be-verb. But the rules have become far more complex. While I have not become privy to Reference Software's recipe books, I conjecture that explicit references to phrases have disappeared in favor of generic references. In other words, if somewhere in a data file a list of verbs can be accessed under the term "-be-," then the original rule can be replaced with the more general rule:

"-be-" refers to a list of lexical structures at a location n in a data file. "@3" refers to the number of terms possibly intervening between "-be-" and "PP." "PP" refers to another list at location n_2 of a data file. The "PP" list is a list that contains the rule "???ed" (any three letters with an ending in -ed) and the set of lexical items that grammarians would call "irregular past participles." This new rule, then, will filter out "is and" and "is red." But the rule will include "is almost filled" by ignoring the intervening word, "is not read" also by ignoring the intervening 'not,' "is gone" by picking 'gone' from the list of irregular participles, and "is burnt" also by recognizing the word from the list of irregular participles. And it will also include other tense forms and all other irregular past participles, since they are listed at file location n_2. The form of Rule 2 is very much like rules that you are likely to see in GRAMMATIK IV and V.

In fact, the user can add rules to GRAMMATIK. To warn against a certain group of wordy sentences, I added:

The rule "fires" on all sentences that begin with "there" and use "that" anywhere in a range of 9 words. For example, the rule will offer this

advice to all following sentences:

There are two ideas that interest me.
There are five pennies in my pocket that I owe him.

Clearly, "Two ideas interest me." and "I owe him the five pennies in my pocket." are indeed less wordy and will probably serve to improve student writing more often than it will serve to worsen it. But the rule will also flag:

There he saw that he had come to the end of his trip.

In this case, 'There' refers to a specific place. The word-deleting, contractive transformation that I applied to the first two sentences is not possible for the third. Clearly, the user must rely on his or her own wisdom to discern the difference between appropriate and inappropriate applications of the rule.[2] Often, students do not have that wisdom. Responsibly acting grammarians and writing teachers, thus, must help students develop the wisdom (1) to resist faulty advice and (2) to recognize unstated advice.

Teaching students to resist faulty advice does require an awareness of how the grammar checker works and an awareness of a student's willingness to accept the grammar checker's judgment. A student paper might include:

> Although, I had written a long and well developed paper and had spent many hours researching its content in the library. I did not get as good a grade as I had hoped since I am not like by the teacher.

Of course, as a teacher convinced of the inferiority of grammar checkers, we could now utter a cheerful cry, tell the student to stay away from the darn things, and be done with it. However, the student knows better because, for each change that you do disagree with, several others have slipped by that you didn't disagree with. And ultimately, can we really be so sure that the student will rely on the teacher's authority and not the grammar checker's. The conclusion that the teacher is wrong will come as easily to the student as the conclusion that the grammar checker is wrong. So to avoid being replaced as an authority and knowing how grammar checkers work, I reconstruct what probably has happened. To begin with, the student had a perfectly acceptable sentence: "Although I had written a long and well developed paper and had spent many hours researching its content in the library, I did not get as good a grade as I had hoped since I am not liked by the teacher." Next, the grammar checker counted the words in the sentence, and, having found that count to be slightly above the average for the piece, it warned, "Long sentences are often difficult to read. Consider rewriting it as two short sentences." And that is precisely what the student has done. Also, the grammar checker probably advised the student to change "am liked" from passive to active voice; not knowing what a passive is, the student manipulated the structure until the grammar checker's recursion ignored it.

As his/her teacher, I know now that (1) the student obeys the grammar checker slavishly, (2) the student does not know the difference between subordinating conjunctions such as "although" and adverbial connectives such as "however," and (3) the student does not know the difference between active and passive voice. In answer to the former problem, I will stand by his or her elbow during the next grammar check; in answer to the second and third, I ask the student to review the appropriate sections in the handbook.

While at sundry students' elbows, I can also teach them to go beyond the grammar checker's advice. Consider the following pattern:

For example:

Very cautiously, GRAMMATIK IV will advise the user to check for the agreement of the second sentence's verb with what "may be" or "appear to be" a compound subject that precedes

that verb. It takes some knowledge of syntactic structures for the user to learn that a comma before the 'and' will separate the two sentences clearly, not only to overrule GRAMMATIK IV's advice but also to make that sentence accessible to the reader, who might otherwise stumble into believing that "sheds" is a plural noun and not the verb of a first sentence that is followed by a second one. Depending on how perverse a chicken the student is discussing here, the revision "If/When the dog sheds, the cock has a meal" may also be in order.

As I have shown already, students show some confusion when they revise to avoid the passive voice. Where the grammar checker flags the warning to avoid passives, students are likely to produce several counterproductive revisions. "I was reminded," for example, most frequently becomes "I am reminded." Such revisions show clearly that the students confuse passive and active voice with past and present tense. Essays that use present tense throughout are rare now since GRAMMATIK will analyze sentences recursively; that is, after each revision, GRAMMATIK will analyze the sentence again and would have told the student about the new structure's still being a passive. More common now are semi-literate revisions. "I was reminded" can become "I got reminded," "I was reminding," or "I was remind." At the root of such confusion is clearly a misunderstanding of what "passives" really are. With some solid background in grammatical structures, students should use this rule far more productively in improving their writing. Maieutically sensitive, the teacher at the grammar-checking student's elbow needs to usher in the appropriate phrasing, which--not very frequently--might entail confirming the passive or which entails citing a series of alternate expressions such as "I remembered," "X reminded me," "I recalled," "X brought back to mind," etc. Again, as soon as memory on desktop computers is amply available, such alternate phrases will probably be part of the software, or the software may allow users to build phrase "libraries."

Clearly, then, students must be aware of grammatical structures, and teachers must be aware of computational processes before students can benefit from admittedly limited, but often overvalued software such as GRAMMATIK, CorrectGrammar, and RightWriter. "I don't like grammar checkers," is an insufficient response from a teacher; and "You're too picky; the grammar checker didn't say anything was wrong," is an insufficient response from a student.

Of course, students must also be aware of the meta-language that the grammar checker uses. After I had manipulated GRAMMATIK V's HELP file so as to remove the End Of File marker at the beginning of the file, I could use WordStar to run an index. In 57 pages of on-line help messages, GRAMMATIK uses about 200 words that, I believe, do presuppose some knowledge of grammatical terminology and/or grammatical concepts.[3] During this summer term, I offered any student a grade of 100 percent to substitute for his or her lowest essay-grade if he or she could give correct definitions or examples for at least one page (ca. 20 words) of grammatical terminology. Only five of twenty students tried the test. Of those five, not one student was able to deliver a single page with satisfactorily correct definitions or examples. Some examples had entertainment value:

One student suggested that a relative pronoun might be "aunt"; presumably, he would have considered a restrictive relative pronoun an aunt who disallows parties. An example of a comma splice: "I am going to the zoo, but my wife can not [sic] go." A subject-verb agreement was defined as "the word that tells what the subject is doing." I wonder what the person meant when s/he wrote that a subjunctive is defined as, "You must pay the bill or face the consequences." To some a nonrestrictive element was "vage [sic] description over there, somewhere." Parentheses, to one student, meant: "to label a word group," and the same student thought that "parenthetical" meant "too many parentheses." Quite reasonably, a preposition is something "before postposition"; and--of course---prepositional means "too many prepositions." A pronoun is "the word after a

possessive noun." And reasonably close to the truth, one budding writer thought that a run-on sentence was "a sentence with more than one idea smashed together."

But the wisdom gets stranger yet: A standard language is "a personal letter, a note, a memo" and formal style is "a resume, bossness [sic] letter, a proposal." Contractions are "upward, downward, forward," and a correlative is "one phrase relating to another." To some students, diction is "something quoted," ellipsis is defined as "not placing emphasis on something," and gender is the "grouping something into one category." Quite correctly, I suppose, a student thought that 'generic' means "a very broad use anywhere type thing," but acronyms are "words with different meaning, more expresive [sic]." An antecedent apparently has increased the hope of dyslexics, for it is "a new type of medicine that helps cure grammar disabilities." An active is "a more pronounced word." An adjective "describes a verb," and--Yes!--an adverb "describes a noun." The apostrophe is "used in plural words [sic] car's [sic]." And an argument is something that "does not match topic, contradicts." A complex sentence is one with "mixed up subjects in one sentence," colloquial means "double," and capitalization means using "capital letters when not needed."

Since help messages from GRAMMATIK will use these terms, one can reasonably conclude that students in my class--who had opted to take computer-assisted composition and who used GRAMMATIK regularly---were in no position to benefit from GRAMMATIK's messages and explanations. On the other hand, I believe that making the meaning of these terms and concepts available to students will indeed have a positive effect on student writing. So the answer is not an avoidance of grammar and grammar checker; the answer is an amplification of the grammar checker's methods. For me, closely analytical--as opposed to holistic--grading is one such method. Ancillary to that method is another computational tool, the spreadsheet. For the sample sentence, "Although, I had written a long and well developed paper and had spent many hours researching its content in the library. I did not get as good a grade as I had hoped since I am not like by the teacher." the grammar checker returns the following summary which it has saved to a file:

Grammatik IV

Summary for C:\stuff

Problems marked/detected: 0/1

Readability Statistics

Flesch Reading Ease: 73
Gunning's Fog Index: 11
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level: 8

Paragraph Statistics

Number of paragraphs: 1
Average length: 2.0 sentences

Sentence Statistics

Number of sentences: 2
Average length: 20.5 words
End with '?': 0
End with '!': 0
Passive voice: 0
Short (< 14 words): 0
Long (> 30 words): 0

Word Statistics

Number of words: 41
Prepositions: 5
Average length: 3.85 letters
Syllables per word: 1.34

The key and only statistic that I feel confident enough to use in my grading is the word count of

forty-one words. If the sentence were to appear in a final copy, I would mark it as follows:

Although, [,\] {--Delete the comma after subordinating conjunctions.} I had written a long and well developed paper and had spent many hours researching its content in the library. [frag +./] {--This is a sentence fragment; connect it to the next sentence with a comma.} I did not get as good a grade as I had hoped since I am not like [v + emp] {--This verb is not an acceptable tense form. Revise: am not liked. Also: You are using passive where you could use the active voice. Revise: the teacher does not like me} by the teacher.[4]

Next, I calculate a grade by means of a spreadsheet analysis:[5]

Essentially, this spreadsheet method does offer a weighted error-count. With forty-one words in this piece of writing, grammatical errors (loosely, 1 through 7) are worth 7.3 percent per count, errors of mechanics (items 8 through 11 are 2.4 percent per count, errors of punctuation (12 through 17) are worth 4.9 percent per count, errors in diction (18 through 22) are worth 2.4 percent per count, errors of sentence style are worth 4.9 percent per count, general errors specific to the assignment are worth 15 percent per count, errors in paragraph construction are worth 12 percent per count, and errors in the planning of the composition are worth 24 percent. The spreadsheet also delivers a count of all errors, five in this case; and it sums the percentage deduction (29 percent) and deducts it from 100 percent, the grade I assume before I find errors.[6]

```
Student:  Sample Student          Course:   Tech.Writ.
-------------------------------------------------------------------------
Word Count:---------->      41<----------:Word Count
Handbook: ER  %      Handbook: ER  %      Handbook:ERR.  %
 1. SS         0%<G||D>18. sp          0%<T||P>Unity:          0%
 2. frag    1  7%<R||I>19. g           0%<I||A>Coh.:           0%
 3. cs/fs      0%<A||C>20. e           0%<O||R>Develop.:       0%
 4. ad         0%<M||->21. w/rep       0%<N||A>Methods:        0%
 5. ca         0%<M||*>22. word^       0%<*||G>-Err.Val: 12.-------
 6. agr        0%<A||---Err.Val:  2.4---------||C>Purpose:     0%
 7. v       1  7%<R||S>23. su          0%<S||O>Subject:        0%
-Err. Val:  7.3------<M||E>24. sub      0%<E||M>Audience:       0%
 8. ms         0%<E||N>25. mp/dm       0%<N||P>Focus:          0%
 9. cap        0%<C||T>26. //          0%<T||.>Thesis:         0%
10. ital       0%<H||E>27. ns          0%<E||->Org.idea:       0%
11. ab/n       0%<A||N>28. ref         0%<N||T>-Err.Val: 24.-------
Error Val:  2.4------<N||C>29. emp   1  5%<C||O>Errors:   5   29%
12. add ,/  2  10%<P||E>30. var        0%<E||T>--------------------
13. del.,/     0%<U||S>-Err.Val:  4.9-------<S||A>Grade:  C     71%
14. ;/         0%<N||G>Content:        0%<G||L>--------------------
15. ap         0%<C||E>Assign.:        0%<E||S>Task:   Sample
16. ""/        0%<T||N>Industry:       0%<N||*>--------------------
17. Other      0%<.||.>Due Time:       0%<.||*> 6/20/92        -Err.Val:  4.9
===Message==-Err.Val:  15.===Message===Message===Message===
Please review fragments, comma punctuation, and tense forms. Try to avoid
 passives in your writing.  See me for an explanation of the difference
                between actives and passives.
```

The following spreadsheet is of an actual student essay.

Student: John Doe Course: Composition

Word Count:----------> 504<----------:Word Count

Handbook:	ER	%	Handbook:	ER	%	Handbook:	ERR.	%
1. SS		0%	<G||D>18. sp	3	1%	<T||P>Unity:		0%
2. frag		0%	<R||I>19. g	15	3%	<I||A>Coh.:	5	5%
3. cs/fs		0%	<A||C>20. e		0%	<O||R>Develop.:		0%
4. ad	2	1%	<M||->21. w/rep	4	1%	<N||A>Methods:		0%
5. ca	3	2%	<M||*>22. word^	2	0%	<*||G>-Err.Val: .99-------		
6. agr		0%	<A||---Err.Val: .20---------||C>Purpose:					0%
7. v	4	2%	<R||S>23. su		0%	<S||O>Subject:		0%
-Err. Val: .60-------			<M||E>24. sub	2	1%	<E||M>Audience:		0%
8. ms		0%	<E||N>25. mp/dm	1	0%	<N||P>Focus:		0%
9. cap	2	0%	<C||T>26. //	1	0%	<T||.>Thesis:		0%
10. ital		0%	<H||E>27. ns		0%	<E||->Org.idea:		0%
11. ab/n		0%	<A||N>28. ref	1	0%	<N||T>-Err.Val: 2.0-------		
Error Val: .20-------			<N||C>29. emp	3	1%	<C||O>Errors:	75	36%
12. add ,/	4	2%	<P||E>30. var	8	3%	<E||T>----------		
13. del.,/	3	1%	<U||S>-Err.Val: .40--------			<S||A>Grade: D		64%
14. ;/		0%	<N||G>Content:	5	6%	<G||L>----------		
15. ap	3	1%	<C||E>Assign.:		0%	<E||S>Task: Comp/Contr		
16. ‘‘’’/	1	0%	<T||N>Industry:		0%	<N||*>----------		
17. Other		0%	<.||.>Due Time:	3	4%	<.||*> 6/13/92		

-Err.Val: .40===Message==-Err.Val: 1.2===Message===Message===Message===

Your essay is ok but not very exciting since the sentence structure is so incredibly simple. Let's try to get the reading level at least up to eighth grade. Work at combining several short sentences into one long compound-complex sentence.

Editor's Note: Since I received Professor Schlieper's paper on disk, but not on paper, I am unable to format the spreadsheet examples clearly. In spite of this, I have included them because their general format suggests how Professor Schlieper uses them to grade papers.

The changes in the error values per category should be obvious. This essay had 540 words. So, grammar is worth .60 percent; mechanics, .20; punctuation, .40; diction, .20; sentence style, .40; general assignment, 1.2; paragraphs, .99; and planning, 2.0. The total error count is 75; the percentage deduction is 36 percent; and the resulting grade is 64 percent, which entails the letter grade "D." Since I have access to a concise count of errors, I can also evaluate revisions accurately. I ask that students revise all instances of editorial marks in response only to the editorial mark. For example, when students see a word group marked "frag" or "w/rep," their first inclination is often to mark out the entire group. They knew the teacher didn't like it, and they'd rather play Nintendo than to crack the handbook. Such revisions are unacceptable; I require students to enter an appropriate response to each editorial mark and will calculate a percentage grade by the formula: "Instances of Correct Revision" divided by "Error Count" times 100 (to move the decimal point).[7]

Once established as a consistent method, this form of grading lets me track student progress with reasonable accuracy. I keep all grades in an electronic gradebook. This, too, is a spreadsheet template that I have developed and adapted to my purposes. The template itself is far too complex to introduce here.[8] It contains "data-input" panels for essay percentages, revision percentages, controlled-writing percentages, test percentages, and attendance counts. It contains "output" panels with calculations for averages, running totals, predictions, short comments, letter-grade analyses, learning-gain analyses, due-date schedules for each student, curves for some grade categories, and many additional mathematical and statistical analyses that seem useful to my trying to understand what I need to do to "optimize" the learning environment.

Excerpting a section from the gradebook, I can show the following values as being indicative of good progress:

	Essay Narra-	Essay Descri	Essay Comp./	Essay Classi	Essay Proces	Essay Causal	Essay Final	1st Revisi	2nd Revisi	3rd Revisi	4th Revisi	5th Revisi	6th Revisi
1	67%	67%	74%	72%	83%	83%	86%	81%	100%	100%	96%	100%	93%
2	72%	52%	75%	89%	88%	81%	89%	100%	100%	88%	100%	91%	96%
3	53%	75%	64%	57%	79%	68%	80%	100%	100%	87%	100%	100%	100%
4	50%	58%	72%	79%	77%	71%	87%	76%	100%	100%	83%	84%	78%

These four rows show four typical students' grades. The essay grades are at an incline; the revision grades are steadily high. So, I could easily group all four examples among the "good" students. The first student has experienced an improvement of 14 percent; the second, one of 17 percent; the third, one of 27 percent; the fourth, one of 37 percent. I calculate improvement by deducting the value of the first essay--roughly what the student could do on his/her own before the beginning of the class--from the value of the last essay--roughly what the student can do upon leaving the class. The average improvement for the normal heterogenous mix of achievers and underachievers will generally produce a learning gain of 11 percent; in fact, I have yet to meet a class that can top that learning-gain value. Unfortunately, I have not been able to persuade any colleagues of this heavily computerized method, so I do not have any comparable statistics of other composition or technical-writing sections.

Students have access to all grade information for the entire class. Using a random-number generator, I assign individual privacy-codes and arrange the entire spreadsheet on the grade-average column as sort value. In other words, without apologies or hesitation, I exploit this generation's grade consciousness. Results of the holistically graded final essay bear me out. Since 1987--as long as I have used this method in a computer-based environment--not one of my students has ever failed the holistically graded final essay, with the exception of a split decision for one dyslexic student, whose spelling problems caused an 'F' assignment by one reader, the other reader having passed him and the jurying reader having also decided to pass him. Normal failure rates vary from 0 to 6 per section, with an estimated mean of about one student per section.

If I wanted to be thorough with this introduction to computational tools that I find useful in the teaching of grammar and writing, I should also give you a description of my interactive, re-usable writing-readiness test that has given me many valuable insights into the relationship between writing and grammatical knowledge of both the intuitive and the explicit type. Instead, I will simply "shove a copy at you" to let you "play" with one version--a take-home, give-away examination that my students in technical writing use as warm-up for their "real" interactive final and midterm examinations. Depending on time constraints, I may even try to "shove at you" a paragraph-reconstruction or controlled-writing program, which--theoretically--should enhance students' grammatical knowledge without the meta-linguistic jargon that students dread so often.[9] Finally, I cannot "shove at you" many other tools of the brave new electronic world, unless you have a networked PC-Lab that uses Novell software and that has a network administrator willing to work with me a few hours or--maybe even--days to set up a menuing system that insulates the student from all DOS and DOS-like commands; an on-line reader-rhetoric that could obsolete publishers and textbooks (and royalties!); a system of interactive tests that could put SCANTRON out of business; a system of electronic mail across the network for students and teachers; and a modem connection to the computerized classroom and E-mail services, which might eventually help save the environment by keeping teachers and students at home at the keyboard of their WAN (Wide Area Network) classroom. Then again--who knows?--a hefty consulting fee might even get me out of Florida during one of the lethargy-inspiring summer months <grin>.

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Appendix

Challenge Assignment

The following six pages contain grammatical terms that GRAMMATIK will use during its checking routine. Using all tools at your disposal in this room for the next one hour, try to define each word on this seven-page list to my satisfaction. If you have defined and/or given an example of all words on three contiguous pages, you will get a grade of 100 percent to be applied as you see fit. This grade can substitute for everything EXCEPT for the seventh essay. I will not answer any questions, but you may feel free to solicit help from classmates.

Abbreviation
Abstractions
ACRONYMS
Active
Adjective
Adverb
AGREEMENT (pronoun/antecedent; subject/verb)
Antecedent
Apostrophe
Archaic
Argument
(definite/indefinite) Article
Auxiliary (verb)

Capitalization
Clause
Cliche
Coherence
Colloquial
COLON
Comma
Comparative (adjective)
Complement
Complex (sentence)
Compound (sentence)
Conjunction
Conjunctions
Connotation
Consonant
Context
Contraction
Contractions
Coordinating (conjunctions)
Correlative
Dependent
Diction
(subject-verb) Disagreement
(pronoun-antecedent) Disagreements

Ellipsis
Emphasis
Error
Exclamation

Gender
Generalization
GENERALIZATIONS
Generic
Generically

Hyphen

Idiomatic
Incomplete
Incompleteness
Indefinite (article)
Independent
Independently
Indirect (quotation)
Infinitive
Intransitive
INVERTED (word order)

Jargon

Language
Latin
Levels (of usage)

Modal (auxiliary verbs)
Modifier
Negative
Nonpossessive
Nonrestrictive (element)
Nonsexist (usage)
Nonstandard (usage)
Noun
Number

Object (in a sentence)

Paragraph
Parentheses
Parenthetical
Participle
PARTICULAR
Period
Periods
Phrase
PLURALS
Positive
Possessive
Preposition
Prepositional
Present
Pronoun
Proofreading
Punctuation

Question
Quotation

Reader
Redundancies
(Pronoun) References
Relative (pronoun)
(grammatical) Rule

Run-on

Semicolon
Sentence
SEXIST
Singular
Spelling
(comma) Splice
Split (construction)
Standard (language)
(formal) Style
Subject (of a sentence)
Subject-Verb (agreement)
Subjunctive (mood)
Subordinate
Subordinated (part)
Subordination
Subordinator
Subordinators
Suffix
Suffixes
Superlative (adjective)
Syllables

Tense
Transitive

Ungrammatical

(sentence) Variety
Verb,
Vocabulary

WHOM
Whomever
Word
Wordy

Notes

[1] With neural networks, we will see changes. We will also see changes with every step in the direction of increased memory and increased speed of computing devices. We will see changes as a result of "fuzzy logic" circuitry, which will say not only "yes" and "no" but also "maybe" on a sliding scale of relative certainty, thus emulating human thinking much more closely than contemporary hardware and software.

[2] As an aside, let me mention another use of GRAMMATIK, that misled more than helped students. A former colleague had heralded to his students the advent of an AI program that would analyze their writing. Using GRAMMATIK II behind the scenes, he would mark papers automatically and return the files to the students, who would then be stuck with strange comments of dubious value coming from a software that they did not know. In contrast, I am not interested in building up the computer as a "mumbo-jumbo" machine. It has some capabilities and does not have some others. The sooner students learn to have reasonable expectations, the better. So, I will sit at a student's elbow while he or she checks an essay. My purpose is mainly to illuminate the limitations of grammar checkers and to help students interpret the messages of the grammar checker reasonably.

[3] A complete list of the meta-linguistic terms appears in Appendix A.

[4] If I had annotated this paragraph on electronic media for a student using electronic mail to submit assignments, the comments in the bracket and those in the curly bracket would have appeared. For students who submit hard copy, only the bracketed editorial marks would have appeared. While I firmly believe that the chatty mode as on E-Mail is better for the student, I also believe that even teachers deserve some sleep and recreation now and then.

[5] I developed this template for Harcourt, so this template is availble through Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. It accompanies the eleventh edition of the Harbrace College Handbook. As far as I know, it and the accompanying user manual are availabe for the asking. The Harcourt version is available for SuperCalc, for Lotus, for DOS Excel, for MAC Excel, and as a stand-alone, compiled program under the @LIBERTY run-time module.

[6] I have also heard the suggestion that the count be structured "positively" so as to count improvements or stylistically desirable features. For obvious reasons, such a count would perforce have to have an open ceiling and thus does not lend itself mathematically to the process of assigning grades, which we teachers also have to generate for our students.

[7] Students always have the invitation to ask me about any editorial mark that they could not find in the handbook or that they could not understand from their reading of the handbook. Unfortunately, many a one never uses the handbook and becomes impositious; others never see me for advice and miss many a subtlety in the handbook; fortunately, there is a goodly number who use the handbook competently and are not hesitant to ask for advice where appropriate. Unfortunately, the latter group is often those students who don't need much help to begin with.

[8] The Chronicle of Higher Education has severally recorded instances of lack of recognition for work in computer software as part of promotion and tenure decisions. Although my home institution has never slighted me in that respect, I can certainly understand how such oversights happen. Picture yourself with three or four books to your credit. Suppose now that you must be evaluated by a committee consisting of non-readers, who as illitarates will judge merely the glossiness of the cover. You would be very, very frustrated, wouldn't you? The printout of the programming code is meaningless to non-programmers; what the program does can rarely be experienced by the occasional user during a demonstration. I recall trying to show a logician my software that guides a student through nine chapters of Copi's Introduction to Logic. Typically, such a program will keep a student busy for an entire semester. But--also typically--the colleague who saw the demonstration of the program wanted to pass judgment after merely one exercise. Anyone who dabbles into development of educational software, then, should either look for the highly visible, single-exercise, special-effect embellished program or be satisfied with occasional positive comments from the learners themselves.

[9] If I don't have enough time to let you play with these pieces of software, if your interest has been aroused, and if you have access to CompuServe, you may download all software mentioned. LOGIC.EXE is a sample chapter from the interactive course in logic; the chapter includes an automated traditional square of opposition, an immediate-inference calculator, and an analysis tool for syllogistic validity--as long as the user knows enough to determine figure and mood, and to translate categorical propositions into expressions of Boolean algebra. With about 250 downloads already, the logic program seems surprisingly popular. The shell of the test program is available also in Library 2 of the EDFORUM (educational forum) as TEST2.EXE; with the shell, users can write their own tests; but anyone who would want to experiment with my test-item data is certainly welcome to the appropriate files. Finally, GUESS.EXE is the paragraph-reconstruction game in its preliminary form. It is available in the EDFORUM's Library 2. It is also available as GERMAN.EXE in Library 3 of FLEFO, CompuServe's Foreign-Language Forum. GERMAN.EXE, of course, has only German paragraphs and instructions for getting umlauted characters from a standard, IBM-compatible keyboard configured for U.S. English.

The Crime

- Ed Vavra

[The following text is all in the computer-assisted presentation that I gave at the conference. The computerized version includes animation and color, both of which improve the presentation. The computer disk (which includes three other presentations) is available from me for $5 to cover the cost of the disk and mailing.]

The sample you are about to look at was written by an eighth grade student whom we will call 'Sue.' On national standardized reading tests, Sue ranked at the 19th percentile (the bottom fifth). On the language skills part of the tests, Sue ranked at the 33rd percentile (the bottom third).

The passage is on the next screen [page]. Please read it all, and then we will look at it in detail. Why is Sue in the bottom 5th/3rd? The passage is detailed and imaginative. There are several major syntactic problems. But, as we will see, they are really all one problem: Sue has a poorly developed sense of the S/V/Complement pattern required for good sentences (and thus 'chunking'). We can consider Sue's end punctuation as signs of her sentence sense. Since the passage has 121 words in 9 'main clauses,' Sue has produced 13.4 words/MC. Hunt's study shows 8th graders averaging 11.3 words/MC. Thus Sue's sense of sentence length is 19% above the norm.

Now let's look at the sentences in more detail. The first 'sentence' has two problems:

a) 'is' is missing in the 'which' clause.

b) 'As' makes the 'sentence' a fragment.

But if we change the period after "away" to a comma, we solve the fragment problem. Why did the Sue omit 'is'? The omission itself suggests her inaccurate sense of the S/V/Complement pattern. But there may be a more important reason! The 'correct' sentence is a 29-word main clause, which Sue was probably trying to hold in STM. Remember that professional writers average 20.3 words/MC (Hunt). And eighth graders average 11.3 (Hunt). The word 'away' is already sixteen words into a 'main' clause. Sue's STM was 'crashing.' Since the mind is faster than the hand, her hand omitted 'is' in an attempt to catch up. Her hand and mind

stumbled to the end of a clause ('away'),
crashed,
and started a new sentence.

Both problems in the first 'sentence' result from Sue (ranked nationally in the bottom third/fifth of her class) attempting to manage a 29-word main clause.

The only problem in the next sentence is the misspelling of 'fresh,' which we will leave as is. In the next twenty-word main clause, the only problem is the omission of the comma after the 'As' clause. The comma is necessary as a 'chunking' signal: what comes after it goes to a different S/V pattern. Some English teachers might want a comma after 'drink.' Ultimately, the question is: will the reader 'crash' without it? Louie [a cartoon character used in the computer presentation] thinks the brevity of the 'main' clauses, the conjunction ('and'), and the repetition of the subject ('you') will avoid a crash. So we'll let it stand.

What comes next is a very 'mature' fragment. '[O]ut of clouds' is adverbial to 'making,' and 'pictures' is the direct object of 'making.'

As you are on your way to grandma's house which a very long way away. You travel by car along the highway seeing the birds in the sky. The nice freash air is very good for you. As you make a stop about half-way there you get something to drink and you are on your way again. Wishing you were already there making pictures out of clouds. When you finally arrive at her very long driveway going very slow and tasting the best cooking ever. As you finally get there from a very old dusty road smelling the cooking as you get out of the car. You get into the house and give her a kiss and ask for the food.

'[M]aking' is a gerundive, modifying 'you,' the subject of the subordinate clause, 'you . . . clouds.' The SC is the direct object of the gerundive 'wishing.' What we have, in other words, is:

level one embedding - constructions subordinate to the gerundive 'making,'
level two embedding - the gerundive subordinate within the clause, and
level three embedding - the clause subordinate to 'Wishing.'

The 'sentence,' of course, is a fragment. 'Wishing' modifies 'you' in the preceding sentence (level four embedding!) This 'sentence' should be joined to the preceding one by a comma, thereby creating a seventeen-word main clause. Such level-four embedding is extremely rare, even among professional writers.

Our last three 'sentences' are actually two SC fragments and a main clause, which should be examined together. The 'when' clause has two gerundives ('going' and 'tasting') subordinate to its subject ('you'). It is eighteen words long and actually modifies the three verbs in the main clause. The 'as' clause includes an embedded clause 'as you get out of the car,' which modifies the gerundive 'smelling.' '[S]melling' modifies 'you,' the subject of the first 'as' clause. Like the 'when' clause, this twenty-one-word clause modifies the verbs in the main clause. Many readers might consider the sentence too long, but the three 'sentences' would be perfectly correct as one sentence. At 54 words, this main clause will challenge the short-term memory of most readers!

The 'errors' we have 'corrected' are , except for the omission of 'is,' all punctuation errors. As 'corrected,' the passage has 28.4 words/ main clause, or 40% more than Hunt found in the writing of professional adults! We should note Sue's use of gerundives - 6 in 5 main clauses (1.20/MC or 4 times the .32/MC of professional writers).

["seeing," "wishing," "making," "going," "tasting," and "smelling"] And, as both Hunt and O'Donnell implied, the gerundive is a 'late-blooming' construction. Eighth graders average .07/MC, not 1.20. Syntactically, this writing is unbelieveably good for an eighth grader!

So where's the crime?

Our profession has failed this student and many more like her. Sue thinks she is not good in English. (She knows her test scores.) Her parents think she is not good in English. (They know her test scores.) Even Sue's teachers think she is not good in English. (They know her test scores.) She is imprisoned in a world of ignorance. Our ignorance! And this is NOT a complaint against all standardized testing. Standardized tests have a place in education. We need to know more about the natural growth of language in individuals.

Most teachers (including college professors of English) know very little about grammar, much less about natural language development. In the 1970's, Hunt & O'Donnell suggested that appositives and gerundives are 'late-blooming' constructions. Students do not naturally master these constructions before the age of tenth graders. But teachers and textbooks across the country often 'teach' these constructions in 4th & 5th grade. Such violation of natural development simply confuses students, especially the weaker ones. 'Readability' formulas have contributed to the problem. Although they are very sophisticated in their calculations of vocabulary, the vast majority of such formulas depend on 'words per sentence' [not even words per main clause] as their sole syntactic component. In order to fit readability formulas, textbook writers and editors have a natural, adult tendency to reduce subordinate clauses to gerundives. Thus, in a 4th grade science text, we find:

Rainwater collected in tin cans may have living things in it.

There are two things about this sentence which would have given Sue great problems when she was in fourth grade. First, 4th graders are still at an age where they have trouble with anything between the subject and verb. Second, what separates this S/V is a gerundive, reduced from a subordinate clause:

Rainwater [which is] collected . . .

Together, these two problems would almost certainly have caused Sue to crash: she would have read 'collected' as a finite verb. But the gerundive by itself causes problems. In SYNTAX OF KINDERGARTEN AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN (NCTE, 1967), Roy O'Donnell had already stated:

> 'The man wearing a coat . . .' may be more difficult than 'The man who was wearing a coat . . . , ' and 'A bird in the tree . . .' more difficult than 'A bird that was in the tree . . .' (92)

The subordinate clause may be crucial for natural syntactic development. But in a 4th grade reader, we find sentences such as:

Feard by people and most animals, the crocodile has terrible jaws.

To adults, this sentence seems simple, but there is good reson to suspect that 4th graders have trouble processing it. They probably 'crash' after 'animals.' An abundance of such constructions in children's reading probably teaches them that 'reading' means crashing. My research, though limited, reveals far too many such constructions in textbooks.

Gerundives per 100 MC

4th Grade Writers	2
7th Grade Writers	2
8th Grade Writers	7
4th Grade Science	8
9th Grade Writers	9
4th Grade Reader.	10
College Freshmen	12
Prof. Writers	32
Henry James	43
Journalists	51

As we mature, we use gerundives because they delete the 'meaningless' connecting words (pronouns & linking verbs) that we no longer need. But younger readers may still need them! Ignoring the natural sequence of syntactic growth may seriously distort the 'chunking' skills of children, especially of those who do not read much on their own. Remember that Sue used four times the gerundives that professional writers do. Was she trying to 'sound like' her textbooks? But her reading scores were in the bottom fifth in the nation! Did her textbooks add to her problem? The unnatural syntax in textbooks, caused by readability formulas, may be teaching children that reading is not a pleasurable experience of extracting interconnected ideas, but rather a two word <CRASH> six words <CRASH> exercise in frustration <CRASH>. Perhaps that is one reason for so many of them not LIKING to read?

Who is responsible?

No department in the academy really wants the responsibility. Professors of Linguistics are more concerned with the complexities of structural, transformational, and comparative grammars. In general, they have no interest in developmental psychology. When someone in linguistics (usually a graduate student) is assigned to teach future teachers grammar, the students study structural and/or transformational grammar. Usually, no attempt is made to relate the grammar to the students' needs as future teachers.

Professors of Education are generally more familiar with developmental psychology and statistics, but they lack a good understanding of grammar. When they do teach a 'grammar' course, they tend to teach surveys. In 'Lion Tamers & Baby Sitters: First-Year English Teachers' Perceptions of Their Undergraduate Teacher Preparation' (ENGLISH EDUCATION, Feb. 83), Bill O'Rourke wrote:

> Should an English education staff be proud or ashamed of the fact that fifteen out of seventeen graduates, after one semester of teaching, tell us that the one thing they wish the univerity would have offered them is a course in how to teach grammar? If it was a goal to purely reflect the public schools in our teaching, this evidence would tell us to be ashamed. If our goal was to reform the English curriculum in secondary schools, then maybe we should be proud. I taught the linguistics methods course at UNL and I taught it with one overall goal: to make language instruction in our secondary schools more than grammar. We covered history of the language, lexicography, dialect, semantics, usage, public doublespeak, and grammar. But we talked about grammar in terms of what is the purpose for teaching grammar, what does research tell us about its relationship to writing and speaking, what is the thinking behind the different types of grammar? It seems to me that this type of approach, this questioning beyond just the methodology, is precisely what English education should be concerned with. (21-22)

Note that fifteen of seventeen teachers were not happy with this course; yet, O'Rourke is still proud of it! Why weren't they happy? Because the course covers too much, too superficially.

Professors of English are almost always interested in literature. Rarely does an English professor volunteer to teach grammar. When required to do so, most often they will randomly select a textbook (usually traditional), thereby expending as little effort as possible.

Professors of Composition have generally made their reputation or been trained in the 'anti-grammar' movement. They certainly do not want responsibility for grammar.

Who suffers?

Sue - and millions of children like her. Isn't our ignorance a crime? We need to know more about the natural development of language in individuals, and we need to use that new knowledge to develop a better curriculum in grammar.

Louie

Writing Skills vs. Writing Skill:
An Ambiguity

Feeding the Arguments about Assessing

Mary Hall

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In July of 1991, the Academic Policies Committee (made up of four non-English faculty and one English teacher) at our small campus issued the following recommendation: "That the university study the issue of assessment as a possible means of evaluating programs in which ... learning skills or mentoring are in place." Simultaneously, our Academic Dean mandated exit assessments for all the writing courses -- Basic, General and even Critical Writing, and told the five English teachers that we had to create, in two months, a list of objectives and then, by the following year, testing tools for these courses.

Conditions leading up to the dean's mandate included the poor reading and writing "skills" that students display across the curriculum. It became clear that some non-English faculty felt frustration in the face of poor performance by their students. It also became clear that they felt the English faculty must not be doing its job. How could a student get a "C" in a composition course and not be able to write a "C" paper in another course? In other words, whatever the combination of specific and general reasons our students don't read and write well, this is an example of the English faculty getting caught in the "squeeze."

On the one hand, students arrive at our doors poorly prepared to read and write. One reason (not the only one) for this is the open admissions policy, over which the English faculty has no control. And the English faculty, willingly enough, assumed the burden of testing incoming students with diagnositc essays to see if they could write (think) coherently. It's a matter of degree, and unfortunately, some don't do well, but our policy is to turn no one away. Instead, they are told that we will "teach" them. Part of this is simply a money issue -- without students we can't stay open. This goes a step further with retention efforts on the part of the president, who not only wants to get students onto the campus but also to keep them there. But the reality is that of 300 students at our campus this year, 52 qualified for suspension because of low grades.

The perception of the problem -- what I would call a misperception -- as well as the generally shared perception of composition by non-English faculty, can be inferred from the Academic Policies Committee recommendation -- that we evaluate programs in which learning skills or mentoring are in place. For some non-English faculty, composition and learning skills are synonymous, and from their statement, it sounds as though learning skills and mentoring are also synonymous. We do have a Learning Center on campus that offers free tutoring in math and writing, and it's true that the writing part of it is operated under the guidance of people on the English faculty. The fact that students enter college poorly prepared and write poorly in their courses, perhaps with less than desired progress or improvement, suggests that we should examine the mentoring and remedial services that we offer and find ways to make them more effective, but it does not in turn suggest an evaluation of the entire composition program. It became obvious to the English faculty that for some outside our field, because they have a rinky-dink, prescriptive understanding of syntax and grammar, they had a rinky-dink idea of what composing is about.

I argued against these assessments, partly because they were insulting to the English faculty,

who in my opinion already bear an inordinant part of the responsibility for closing the gap between where students are and where they should be. Accompanying the dean's mandate was this statement: "This is not to say we ("we" being the English faculty) do a poor job already, but that we need to seek confirmation of the program's quality." I also objected because, as that sentence and others suggested, the control of the testing would be in the hands of people outside the English faculty (the dean, for instance) who have no background in composition theory, and it wasn't clear how the testing would be used to affect our course content.

I felt obligated to point out that composition courses are not primarily remedial, and in fact even Basic Writing is only quasi-remedial; and also that comp courses are not in the service of other (what some call "substance") courses. In other words, the language of the committee's recommendation revealed the trivialized view that some held of the composition course. In response I stated:

> ... the opposition I'm going to question here is one foisted .. on the composition teachers: the "skills versus substance" opposition and the categorization of the composition course as a "skills" course within that opposition.
>
> One could call it a skill or quasi-skill (not skills) course, if skill refers to analytical method. But, in any case, skill means something different to the composition teacher than it does to those outside the field. Certainly, for us, it does not preclude substance, for no one can write without substance. Nor can good writing -- writing as thinking -- be taught divorced from substance. Content and form, substance and skill -- come together. What the composition teacher has, which is different from what other teachers have, is the opportunity (and the responsibility) to choose the substance ... with an eye to creating a trial and error atmosphere wherein thinking can be examined in a variety of ways. The focus, in choosing content, is not so much on a particular body of knowledge but what one does with it. We open that out and examine it. Most simply put, students write, and then they are held accountable for that written thinking.

How does this tie in with syntax, grammar and punctuation review? In the composition course, it is appropriate to review those things on an as-needed basis and to see them as a means to an end (the end being the creation of a written position -- in other words, a composition), rather than an end in itself. The latter is the prescriptive method, wherein review is aimed at "correctness." The former is aimed at no less "correct" a writing style, but emphasis is placed on the word "style." Composition is not separable from one's style. And one's style is made up of sentence structure and word choice.

My own experience teaching composition for 15 years has reinforced my belief, over and over, that the heart of style is at the sentence level, and this, in turn, is not separable from thinking. Students who can write only in simple sentences, for instance, will have a jalopy-way of expressing themselves and of understanding their subject matter. Students who subordinate but do so haphazardly, without conscious choice, will not have adequate control of their subject matter. And students who have difficulty writing complete sentences are also having difficulty in expressing complete thoughts. In other words, in addressing sentence structure, we are also addressing understanding, control, expression -- thinking. We do so generally in a confrontational fashion, or, more euphemistically put, a reactive fashion. The student writes, and then we discuss how changing and shaping, mostly on the sentence level, will allow a crystallization of intelligence, will allow clarity to emerge, will result in manipulation of subject matter into a linguistic creation. Students who need review in grammar and syntax do that simultaneously with the more sophisticated goal of composing, and in fact such review comes to mean more to them when it is in the service of this more ambitious goal.

The misconception on the part of some non-English faculty is that progress should be immediately transferrable to other courses. But in order to lay sufficient groundwork so that the students can continue to grow after the course, in order to address analytical thinking simultaneously with sentence structuring, the composition teacher can't aim at immediate results only. At the college level, the time has come for students to start developing

their own styles -- that is, to find themselves linguistically -- by absorbing uniformity but also expressing their individuality. I don't believe this can be cultivated with a preoccupation with "correctness." For one thing, correctness suggests that they are (still) absorbing the rules of "someone else." Prescription threatens to bring students under total control, with acceptance of rules through memorization, not necessarily understanding, and especially without a personal stake (for instance, creating a new way of seeing for their readers, for themselves) to keep them interested.

My own hope for our campus is that the composition teachers can educate the non-English faculty regarding the point where remediation ends and college-level writing experience begins; we are working to ensure that Learning Center tutorials are geared to an immediate goal (having students review certain rules so that they can "correct" errors) but also always to a long range goal (having students look up things for themselves in handbooks in order to develop a reference tool habit) and also, very importantly, to a rhetorical goal, both immediate and long range -- so that students will see the "pay off" when they shape their sentences not only correctly but, within the sphere of "correctness," artistically.

I support the ATEG's resolution that "every high school graduate" should be able to analyze "the clause structure of a short passage...," first of all because I feel that undertanding clause structure is essential to breaking out of habitual patterns of writing and thinking that are limiting students in their conceptualizing; I support it too because a stronger foundation, earlier in their education, would perhaps enable more progress in the college level composition course so that more thinking skill would transfer to other courses, taken simultaneously or subsequently.

Ambiguity over simple words like "skills" versus "skill" cloud over the chance to see what should be the real focus of the composition course, a course aimed at something much more fundamental in students' thinking than writing do's and don't's that can be carried to the next class, much like a ruler and a notebook. It does seem appropriate for non-English faculty to look to the English teachers for some answers to the question, "Why can't students write well," but the English teacher will be caught in the "squeeze" unless it's recognized that, while certain kinds of leadership can be offered by the English faculty in addressing writing problems, it is nevertheless everyone's responsibility to address the gap between where students are and where they should be. That could mean more cooperative efforts between high school and college level teachers; it could mean that non-English faculty will themselves have to review grammar, syntax and punctuation sufficiently to interface more constructively with English faculty -- in other words, learn to understand their own style and the style of their disciplines, and how that style is unique and/or similar to other academic and non-academic writing. I suspect that some of their inclination to place blame with us is defensive -- they are insecure about grammar and syntax rules and conventions and take the attitude that it isn't their field. But thinking is everyone's purview, and syntactical versatility is essential to good thinking.

The problem can't be addressed, in my opinion, through mandated composition assessing, instituted by people outside the composition field and, even worse, controlled by people outside the field. I can understand the frustration of non-English faculty. But if content and form, substance and style, are not separable (this is what I believe) we can't see the composition course as simply the handmaiden of other courses; not can we see grammar, syntax and punctuation as separable from what it is one is trying to say.

At our school, we have temporarily disgarded the list of objectives and also the assessment project, and have begun, instead, to attempt open discussion regarding the nature of writing/thinking. This is a much more sophisticated proposition than is "learning skills." The former is college-worthy. The latter is a reductive idea about what goes on in a composition course that implies that English teachers are the only ones that need worry about how students shape their sentences, how they express themselves in writing. In other words, we are attempting to develop a philosophy about writing, within which grammar and syntax have not a prescriptive place but a more balanced, give-and-

take position, in which they to some extent shape expression but in which, to some extent, a desire to express oneself -- to create a way of understanding for the reader and for oneself -- shapes them.

The fact is, the composition course is, when properly focused, rhetorically oriented. As such, a review of syntax and grammar and punctuation takes on a different significance. Primary always is purpose, subject, audience, one's opinion, one's handling of detail. The writer is always improving expression through shaping. Thus to say a criterion for completing composition should be ability to control errors falls short of our goals. If too much emphasis is placed on errors and that emphasis is enforced by authority figures, it could skew the course away from its essential reason for being. Within the rhelm of correctness, a person could be limited in his/her ability to articulate, and it's the composition teacher's job to develop that ability. Review of grammar and syntax can enhance that development. This, rather than focusing primarily on "correctness," is where our greatest efforts should be spent in composition. In order to retain that focus, the question of "Why can't students write" must be addressed on a broader plane -- involving high school and college teachers, English and non-English faculty, in a cooperative effort that doesn't expect, unrealistically, in the context of a 12-year education everything to be put to rights in a three-month composition course.

Grammar Portfolios

Cornelia Paraskevas

Western Oregon State College

Last fall, sometime around the first week after I had started teaching the upper division class on grammar, I was preparing my notes for class and got all excited about a prepositional phrase because it could be adjectival or adverbial and there was no way of telling which one it was. I thought for sure my students would share my excitement the next day and would realize that in grammar there isn't always a unique answer; some issues involve two or more answers equally correct. But what happened the next day in class was what I've always dreaded when teaching grammar; after I gave them the two different possible analyses, one student raised her hand and asked me "But which one is THE CORRECT ANSWER?" This pattern continued almost throughout the term -- they were so concerned with getting the right answer on the in-class work so that they would ace the tests, that they forgot to enjoy the "voyage" -- the discovery process that leads to the possible answers. Quite often, when they came up with THE ANSWER, especially in complex ares such as particles vs. prepositions or object complements, their answers were a mere guess; they couldn't provide the explanation to support the answer. And if that wasn't discouraging enough, I also realized that a lot of them couldn't see the value of knowing grammar -- they couldn't connect what they were learning to their own writing. The class, for some, seemed just a "hoop" to get through in order to receive their degree. I was getting frustrated and discouraged.

I had been using portfolios in writing classes, and writing-to-learn journals in my linguistics class for at least two years; both seemed to work really well: portfolios freed students from text anxiety and gave me a chance to see their progress; the writing-to-learn strategies I was using in linguistics helped the students explore the material discussed in class in more detail and showed me where they were having difficulties understanding the concepts. Since both techniques worked, separately, in my other classes, I decided to combine them and use writing-to-learn strategies and portfolios in the advanced grammar class. I figured that having to do short, weekly assignments that would be part of their portfolios would free them from test-anxiety; writing about their difficulties would help them work their way out of them.

So during winter term, in my Monday, Wednesday, Friday class, I started a new "routine": during the week, we were working on a particular grammatical construction using examples from real language. We started with simple material: types of verbs, noun phrases, prepositional phrases, and "progressed" to the more complex areas: noun clauses, relative clauses, object complements, particles. Every Friday, I gave the class a piece to analyze at home over the weekend; one, single spaced typed page from an article from Time, Newsweek, the American Educator and later Sunset or a page from a short story or novel -- whatever I happened to be reading at the time (see Appendix A). I looked quite carefully to make sure that the pieces contained a lot of the constructions we were working on at the time. I did not edit these pieces at all -- I wanted them to struggle with the difficulties of analyzing real language rather than give them a simplified version of it. One of the frustrations I have had with grammar books is that

the writers use simplistic, 5-word sentences that nobody uses in real life. Students are thus led to believe that grammar is a "mental exercise" in analyzing childlike sentences and has nothing to do with real language -- the language they write and read daily.

As they analyzed that piece, they had to write a process piece -- a record of their thinking and reasoning, and turn in both their analysis and their process piece on Mondays. For the first half of the term, their pieces were a complete, detailed record of their thoughts -- a movie of their minds as they were taking each sentence apart:

> In this first sentence, I first looked for the verb. The main verb is "created." I then looked for the subject of the verb in order to find a noun phrase. The subject noun phrase is "the founding fathers of Europe." which contains a prepositional phrase "of Europe". It's an adjectival phrase because it modifies the noun "fathers."

After they got used to the idea that writing is not just for writing classes but for all classes and they started using writing to think, they realized how useful these process pieces were. As one student recently commented,

> Writing everything down forces you to slow down. I had to look for the subject and the object slowly and write them down. I often figured them out as I was writing them. And it felt good to be able to see that I can actually justify what I'm doing."

It is quite obvious that writing their thoughts down as they are doing grammatical analysis helps them answer their own questions and teaches them how to learn grammar:

> My first process pieces clearly showed how unorganized my thoughts were. I would get easily confused and back myself into a corner. As the term went on, I begun to use the piece to sift through my confusion; they had become a record of my thoughts.... Many times, because I had written my initial thoughts on a sentence, the answer would jump out at me. I had known the answer all along, but it took writing it down and coming back to it to realize that.... (Through these pieces) I also became aware of the needless mistakes I was making. There were many times that I wanted to quit because I didn't think I could figure it out. Now, it is obvious to me that the process pieces saved me.

Using these detailed, "write-as-I-analyze" pieces helped me see if they were taking any shortcuts that could lead to confusion and misidentification. A number of students, for example, had trouble identifying the different types of verbs, especially separating transitive from linking verbs. This was obvious in their process pieces when they identified complements as objects. Had this confusion been an isolated instance, I would have spent time with the student, in a one-to-one session, explaining the material. Since, however, one third of the class had trouble with the verbs, I had a chance to go back and explain them again, and show them some tests (passivizing the transitive verb, for example) that they could use to help them in the identification of verb types.

Since I comment on these process pieces, students receive "instant feedback." Through my comments, they realize where their analysis was wrong and what the proper analysis should be; as they often said, "the immediate feedback helps with the next assignment.. I understood what I was doing wrong and I started watching for the mistakes I knew I was prone to make."

As the term went on, and I was sure that there were no major troublespots and that they were taking all the basic steps of grammatical analysis (find verb and subject first no matter what else they were asked to do), I asked them to use writing to explore their difficulties -- write about those constructions they had trouble figuring out. They used writing to think out loud, work their way around a stumbling block, or even figure out a construction halfway through writing -- I often saw them change their minds about their analysis in the middle of a paragraph.

Cynthia:

Is "seem" in the first sentence (Locke's theories seem remarkably modern] transitive? It seems like it is: "theories seem modern" but I can't change "seem" to the passive voice. This must be one of those weird verbs.

Next one "the concept was remarkably circumscribed". Hmmm Can I say "was very circumscribed" Yes. So it's not part of the verb, therefore this is active, not passive. It can't be changed.

"By seeking to locate eduction... " Is that by-phrase in passive voice? I don't think so because the verb has no auxiliary form of "be."

Now here's another one. How can I change "become" from active to passive? It seems transitive (work became an activity) but I can't say "become" with form of "be." This stumped me.

Amy P.

I wonder if I've marked the verb wrong in the sentence "lawmakers may vote to provide grants to private colleges." I did have 'may vote to provide' as a single verb, but may be it is just 'may vote.' The reason I think this is because I can insert the word 'decide' and it really only replaces 'may vote.' So I am going to reassess the sentence now. I've left my verb 'may vote'. Now that I see it again from a fresh perspective, I can't figure out why it was so difficult before.

After about 5 weeks of doing grammatical analysis on someone else's writing, I figured it was time to make grammar "connected knowledge" for them. Instead of a midterm exam, I decided to force them to make connections between what they were learning in grammar and their own writing. After all, I had been trying throughout the term to show them that grammar can help them with their own writing. At midterm time, they had seen about 20 different pieces of real language -- short stories and articles. I asked them to look at all those pieces they had analyzed and examine one particular construction -- prepositional phrases -- closely. Then, they had to choose a page of a paper they had written for another class and analyze PP's too; finally, in their process piece, they had to draw conclusions about their own PPs versus those of published writers and see if there was something they could learn about their own writing in terms of its grammatical structure. Were they satisfied with the length and variety of their Prepositional phrases? Were their PP's placed next to the word they modified or were they dangling and unclear?

"The writers we've read used long, nested prepositional phrases but I use two-word phrases. I need to work on my style, as I edit, to make sure my constructions are not as childish as they now appear to be."

"In general. I use too many introductory prepositional phrases in my writing. I was pleased to note that I cut them down in this piece. I think I use them because in my natural train of thought, I connect one idea to another by using them. When I revise my writing, I like to take many of them out. I rearrange the sentence so that I don't begin too many sentences with an introductory PP. Wow! I've made progress. I should pat myself on the back."

Tim U.

As for my own piece of writing in which I had to pick out prepositional phrases, let me first say that it was a great idea on your part. I learned so much about the unconscious decisions that I make while writing that it amazed me. My writing has always followed a distinct pattern of adverbial phrases which contain abundant adjectival phrases, which lead into overly long ramblings. This has sometimes inhibited my ability to be understood through my writing -- or at least for others to easily read and follow what I had written. Before this assignment, I knew a problem existed, but wasn't able to place my finger on it. Now I know: I use too many, long prepositional phrases.

It is clear that they found this assignment extremely useful -- they had never thought of analyzing their own writing in terms of its grammatical structure. I guess they didn't see themselves as writers and didn't think their work could be analyzed in the same way as the professional writing we were looking at. They also clearly saw the connection between grammar and their own writing -- grammar was not for the writing that others did, but for their own as well. There was,

after all, some kind of practical application for that tough subject matter. As we worked through this analysis of their writing, they understood that grammatical choices were, in fact, rhetorical choices, as Martha Kolln has repeatedly said.

> I know that the reason people use passive sentences is so that the agent is omitted yet implied. The paper from which I took my paragraph to analyze was one I had written in response to an article on how poorly new teachers are treated. I was surprised and angered at the treatment new teachers receive from older teachers and the administration. The response that I had written conveyed this fact, but because I had used so many passive sentences, the effect wasn't as powerful as it would have been had I written the sentence in active voice"!

Understanding sentence structure and being able to manipulate it so they could focus on specific parts of the sentence empowered them. One of my students told me how his instructor had commented that a sentence starting with "there is" was not appropriate for college-level writing. David, my student, was proud that he was able to explain to his instructor his rhetorical reasons for choosing this construction... The instructor was surprised!

All these out-of class and in-class assignments are the foundation for their portfolio which they submit for their final evaluation (and final grade) at the end of the term. I ask them to choose only 10 of these assignments (5 in-class and 5 out-of-class). As an introduction to their portfolio, I ask them to write a 5-6 page paper, a final process piece, that explains their portfolio choices. I like to call this piece "monitor knowledge" piece because it helps them see what they have learned and what they still have trouble with. We spend one or two class periods freewriting and drafting this piece (see Appendix B). I ask them to read their work from the first 5 weeks of the term and then write about it; then, they repeat this process for the work done during the last 5 weeks of the term. The next step is to choose 5 in-class and 5 out-of-class assignments and freewrite on those. Finally, they are to spend 10 minutes or so writing about their development as grammarians: where did they start at? Where are they now? do they show them about their progress? Where did they start? What have they learned? What are they still having trouble with?

> "I chose the article about Sesame Street in which we converted active to passive because I found it very useful. The active/passive difference is something I've never really been conscious of in my own writing or the writing of others."

> "I began, in my series of five out-of-class assignments, with the first one. This assignment asked us to identify NP's. I identified the NP's that I immediately recognized. The problem I ran into, however, was determining how much of the sentence was to be included. I left out a number of NP's such as the simple pronoun because I couldn't see how a two-letter word could be an NP. In addition, I had included too many works on several occasions. Another reason I included this piece was because of my process piece -- a rather foolish one it was. Obviously, at that time, I tried to take the easy way out. The way I have organized my assignments represents my growth in learning. I learned how to learn!"

> "I included this assignment on analyzing my own writing because I went into it with the wrong attitude. I assumed that my own writing would be easy to analyze because I knew what I wanted to say or modify. This wrong attitude only served to frustrate me. I was surprised at how complex my own writing was. My prepositional phrases were all over the place. They weren't always next to the verb when they were adverbial, and when they were adjectival, I had trouble knowing what they were supposed to be modifying. On the assignment we did on identifying everything in our own writing, I was surprised once again. This time, it was the number of passive structures I used that took me off guard. There were eight in a ten-sentence paragraph. I was amazed at this discovery because knowledge of passive sentences and why they're used wasn't something I learned about until this term."

Under ideal conditions, I would defer judgment (grading) until their portfolios were submitted; but I work in less than ideal conditions, at a teaching college, with a 12-course annual load (4 classes each quarter). So I've had to compromise;

part of what goes into their portfolio already has grade. The five out-of-class pieces they include are already graded -- I have been grading them and commenting on them throughout the term. They count for 60% of the portfolio grade. I have to grade only the five in-class pieces and the final process piece which count for 10% and 30% of their grade, respectively. I quickly glance through their in-class assignments to make sure they are completely done but spend some time looking over their final process piece, the piece that summarizes the term for them with respect to the progress they have made in grammar. In order to write it, they must not only reread everything they did throughout the term, but they must look carefully at the comments they received, respond to them, and comment on their recurrent mistakes. Choosing 10 pieces out of 30 or so pieces they've worked on is no easy task because their choices must be explained in writing: what do these pieces show them about their ability to do grammatical analysis? what have they taught them? what still remains unclear?

Using these process pieces and giving short, weekly assignments that build to an end-of-term portfolio did increase my workload. It's much easier to just give a midterm and a final. But the advantages of this approach clearly outweigh the hardships: for the students, there is no test-anxiety. They can experiment with different possibilities in their process pieces; as long as their reasoning is there, they get credit. More often than not, they figure out, through writing, the proper analysis; and the "correct answer" is well reasoned and can be explained to anybody! They also have a number of grades to work with, not just two. But most important, grammar is not "abstract" any longer. Grammar is a tool they have learned how to use in order to analyze the language they hear and read everyday, the language that they themselves use. As Sarah, one of my students commented at the end of the term, "Grammar is the analysis of words and their relationships."

APPENDIX A

PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES

Identify all the prepositional phrases in the following passage:

Ever since 1951, when "the founding fathers of Europe" created a six-nation Coal and Steel Community, the Old Continent has managed nothing but baby steps in the march from economic cooperation to true political identity. For 40 years, institutional Europe remained mired in agricultural and commercial trivia -- apparently fated to go on discussing the price of butter and the harmonization of refrigerators until the end of time. Last week, however, the European Community's top leaders shook off their mercantile preoccupations and took a giant stride toward authentic political unity.

As usual in the 12-nation EC, the map emerged only after a marathon round or arduous and sometimes bitter haggling. The plan is full of ambiguities, technicalities and exceptions. And it is disfigured by exemptions for Great Britain in two key ares. But the Treaty of Maastricht (named after the provincial Dutch town that hosted last week's summit) is nonetheless a turning point for Europe. It practically ensures that a common European currency will go into circulation before the end of the century. It creates a European political force, dubbed Europol. It sketches plans for a future European army. It endows the EC with new responsibilities in a dozen areas, from culture to telecommunications and consumer protection.

It was high time. Battered by stiff competition from Japan and the United States, the EC is on the verge of creating a single internal market for its 340 million citizens, to go into effect at the end of next year. But it was the cataclysmic changes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union that finally pushed the Europeans to get their political act together. Those changes left Western Europe the dominant economic power on the Eurasian continent, but without the diplomatic or military strength to cope with the new situation to the east.

ENG 492 -- Noun Phrases

Identify all the noun phrases in the following passages:

Montour's name comes from a farming town that was dismantled and converted into wetlands in 1989 by the Bureau of Reclamation, the land's longtime owner. Nearby, the North Fork of the Payette moves toward Black Canyon Reservoir, a few miles downstream.

Discovery Park beach, the most popular tidepooling area in Seattle, is a partial construction site now because of expansions of an adjacent sewage plant. So city parks' marine specialists after a search for new, more pristine intertidal walks, have settled on two.

Spring brings the return not only of daytime low tides but also the reappearance of what winter tides hide: hermit crabs, sea stars, other varied sea life, even the rocky shoreline where they live. On the walks, guides direct you to spot animals that camouflage themselves: the spongy, green sea anemone that appears a slimy rock until it exposes its pink tentacles, or the brilliant orange sea pen that looks like an old-fashioned quill as it waves its plume in the current.

The first few miles of the rock-strewn dirt road descend gently across a tableland of junipers and pinon pines. After the trees give way to a grassy expanse, a spur leading off to the right takes you to the top of the twin sandstone arches that gave the trail its name. Back on the main trail, you get a taste of slickrock riding as the slope steepens, culminating in a swift drop into Little Canyon.

As you saddle up and roll off down the Castleton-Gateway Road to the Polar Mesa Trail, fields of lupine and Indian paintbrush that grow after snows melt line your route. Breathtaking views of Fisher Valley open up on your left as you continue down Thompson Canyon Trail.

While Moab certainly attracts its share of hard-core bike bums who are happiest after grinding up or flying down a seemingly vertical rock face, less dedicated mountain bikers can find plenty of ride options that provide thrills and stunning scenery without putting life and limb at risk.

APPENDIX B

ENG 492 -- Preparing the Final Process Piece (in-class writing)

1. Read all the work from the first 5 weeks of the term.
2. Freewrite for 10 minutes: What strikes you in these early assignments? What patterns of errors do you see? What "lights" do you see? How much progress did you make? Use lots of examples from your work.
3. Repeat steps 1 and 2 for the last 4 weeks of the term.
4. Choose 5 out-of-class graded assignments. Freewrite on your choices: why did you choose these ones? What do they reveal about your learning? Use specific examples from each piece. Which corrections clarified issues for you? What issues still remain unclear? Again, use lots of detail and specific examples from your work.
5. Repeat step 4 for 5 in-class assignments.
6. Look at the two pieces of your own writing that you analyzed this term and freewrite: What was it like to look at your writing in terms of its grammatical structure? What strikes you as a discovery about your own writing?
7. Freewrite for 10 minutes on your development as a grammarian. Where did you start at? Where are you now? Tell the story of your development using specific examples.

Visualizing the Language

Bernice Lever Farrar

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Walking through the hallways of Seneca (King) in 1989 and pondering, "How could I get my students interested in grammar?", I passed several students enthralled with video game machines. "If only I could get little PAC men to munch up their errors on a screen, they might pay attention." Eureka!

The ideas behind COLOURWORDS, computed assisted teaching or learning disks, and THE COLOUR OF WORDS, the grammar text book, began. Yes, using colour is an excelelnt way to visualize the words that combine to create the English sentence. Eight basic colours to represent the 8 types of work that words do in a sentence.

Before explaining my colour coding system, I would like to express my admiration for the dedication and vision of Ed Vavra and the humour and humanity of Martha Knolln (not excluding their intelligence or good common sense) in sustaining these meetings. Now I wish I had read all the useful and inspiring papers in Volumes 1 and 2 of previous conferences before I spoke! If only ATEG had been a strong association 20 years ago,.... We have a tremendous challenge in changing the focus of the teaching of English. ATEG will succeed because it must!

In Ontario, the Hall-Dennison Report of 1976 brought in the concept of "whole language" and "writing across the curriculum" as the only mandated method from the Ministry of Education. Now, we, teachers of English, at community colleges and universities in Canada attempt to cope with semi-literate students who cannot write in correct nor clear sentences. About 25% of freshman students need remedial or academic upgrading classes in English.

This is a direct result of the Ontario Ministry of Education mandate "that 10% or less of English class time shall be spent on grammar, spelling, punctuation, and other mechanical techniques."

Thus I devised a workbook/textbook that aids students by thier visualizing of the language. Students enjoy the system as they are involved in creating many of their own examples as well as putting various parts of speech to work in comprehending and in composing English sentences. THE COLOUR OF WORDS is in a 3-ring binder, so they can insert pages of their own in place.

In my system, nouns are red. Adjectives and articles are orange with pronouns in purple. These 3 grammar related words are close colours on the art colour wheel. Verbs are black with adverbs in brown. Prepositions are blue and phrases (both prepositional and verbal) have blue round brackets. Green is the colour for conjunctions and for green square brackets around subordinate clauses. Rare interjections are tinted yellow. Students enjoy the double duty of verbals by dual striping them as bumblebees or caterpillars.

Colour gets their interest in words and language. "But how was I to sustain that interest?" "How could I involve them as deeply in grammar and basic composition classes as I did in my creative writing classes?" After comparing the two types of classes, I developed exercises and activities that were student-centred. Grammar exercises are only done in class, often in small groups (table of 3 to 6), and then completed and corrected orally with the whole class. Individual quizzes check one's progress. (40% on quizzes and 60% on compositions)

In Week One, students make family trees of

siblings, parents and grandparents. These diagrams have names, places, dates and a favourite item or belief for each person. They create a NOUN tree. They now have a personalized grammar text and they never forget that nouns are the names of persons, places and things - concrete and abstract. By sharing our "trees" that first week or so, we bond by learning of each other's family. Students actually get excited and want to talk in class about their families as they seem to learn new information in making their "trees". With re-marriages, some trees get quite bushy!

Next we work on the problems of nouns: plurals (10 types) and possessives. Then we substitute pronouns for the nouns that we are using. We attempt to give a 1 to 2 minute review of a film or tv show without ONE pronoun. We decide that pronouns are useful.

Soon we are defining ourselves with adjectives via name poems. (P - patient, petty, A - attractive, athletic, T - teasing, tomboy or telepathic, etc. for PAT) Name poems are fun, impromptu writing. Then we work to choose business-like adjectives for our job application letters and personnel reports.

Yes, each of the 8 parts of speech are related to the students' needs in the future, especially in the workplace. Basic problems are tackled with fun and shared exercises. These are the lower 20 % of students who need individual help and encouragement with their assignments from main programs, so I do not use a reader or literary text. If I am to give them confidence to continue in their schooling, I have to help them be successful in all their written assignments and oral presentations across the curriculum! As I do not believe in withholding information when a student asks about any essay or report they are creating, the student eventually accepts I am there to help, not just look for ways to assign failing grades for every English error. Perhaps, my colleagues in developmental pyschology or history or logic will also share their knowledge of the correct form of written English with these same students. (However valid and rich are the many spoken dialects existing in the English speaking world, most of us accept that our students need to know how to write -even speak at times - in white, male, middle-class English.)

Eventually, rental agreements, loan and job contracts are brought to classes so we can colour clauses. They soon learn why our parents warned us to read conjunctions ("Watch those If, And, But's") carefully. Students are amazed to see a chart of an English verb written in 72 ways! By using the colour black between the other colours in their sentences, they seem to more readily grasp the concept of a verb (verb phrase) being 4 words in length. (Ella might have been sleeping alone on the night of his murder.) I also use sentences from their own writing as well as their program textbooks to show the various uses of words. Also I do this to check if they can read their textbooks!

Meanwhile, the 'bug-bears' of fragments, run-ons, and "switchitis" in verb tenses or subject number are the focus of other lessons. Later chapters deal with spelling, punctuation and vocabulary building, and more. Short or one page essay and opinion pieces are written weekly. Often these are rewritten until they are error free and they, too, are shared aloud. We can all learn from each other's examples and,often, hearing other student voices is more important than hearing mine in that classroom!

By the end of one term (15 weeks) with an enthusiastic teacher using THE COLOUR OF WORDS, students in EAC149 and EAC 140 are ready for college level reading and writing. That is these students can now read their textbooks, find information, either explain or comment on that research and connect their ideas in sentences in well written paragraphs.

For the very poorest readers and writers, I have found that a system of brainstorming before outlining that uses double spokes of a wheel is very effective. The SPOKING diagram or example is in an appendix. Students who communicate in T-shirt slogans of 2 or 3 words, such as "War Happens" benefit from using a grammar chart approach to creating topic sentences from their few outline words. Various models can be set up by the teacher to give some variety to sentence structures, but once students have used a fill-in-the-boxes approach to sentence building, they seem to develop a better flow to their own writing.

ONE TYPE OF GRAMMAR CHART

Adjective	Noun	Adverb	Verb	Preposition	Adjective	Noun
	war		happens			

Preposition	Pronoun	adjective	noun	verb	adverb
Before	it	,	peace		

Some students learn by reading abstract print explanations, others learn by hearing the teacher's words, and some by seeing and constructing visual models of their own to represent their thoughts. Using the tools of grammar, such as underlining main subjects and verbs in topic sentences in opening chapters of their major textbooks, does help students to comprehend daunting sentences. They find if they locate the grammar elements in confusing sentences, even with new vocabulary (for instance, in biology or geography), that these are understandable. How many of you use parsing as ONE aid in decoding strange reading material? My approach to visualizing the language is more than just colouring.

My students to not object to buying nor using 8 coloured pens or pencils. A colour-coded sentence is fast to mark as the teacher's eyes soon act like a Scantron machine!

My greatest reward is seeing the self-confidence blossom in students as they begin to trust my opening assertions. "Your opinions are 100% correct for you." "I will help you express them clearly so that others will understand your reasons for your views." "You may even convince a few others to agree with your opinions." "But have the courage to express your own ideas and the wisdom to compare your thoughts with others' logic and proofs." Through clear writing, we can develop clear thinking and vice versa, but we must be open to sharing to start that kind of growth in our students and ourselves.

A writing workshop (and that's what my grammar class is) must have a supportive atmosphere in which students , who are inarticulate - even confused thinkers from a lack of vocabulary by which to name their feelings and ideas - , can stretch and grow without fear of ridicule. Beginning with our family tree - even my example as their teacher - starts that process of acceptance as people all striving to be better communicators through supportive sharing. How's that for coloured thinking?

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((Other teachers/professors are now using this approach. I welcome more control groups using THE COLOUR OF WORDS and alternate texts so research can demonstrate the various strengths of each different method.))

P.S. Thank-you, other learned presenters, for your helpful bibliographies. Although I earned as a mother of 3 my M.A. in English at York University in Toronto, I am not an academic by inclination. As a poet and ex-primary school teacher, I am continuing to devise exercises and apprcaches to help teenagers and adults to improve their communication skills. ATEG is a wonderful, supportive resource for all of us in the English teaching profession.

SPOKING

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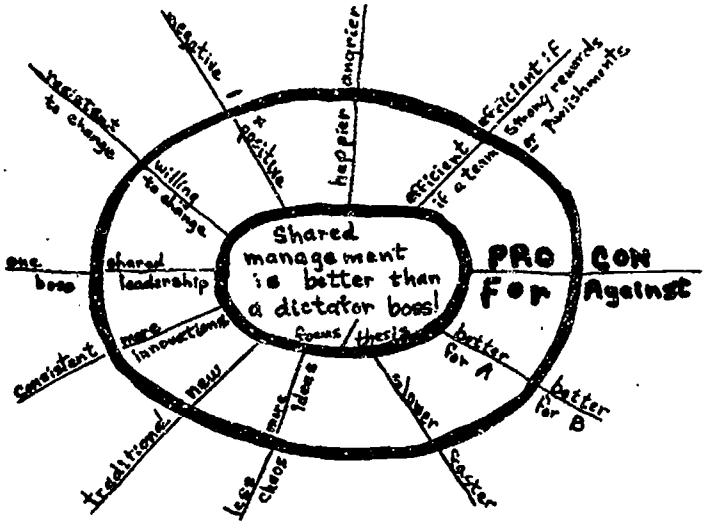

Bernice Lever's Outline System

for Evaluating Ideas and Ideals.

Thursday, June 18

9:45	Registration (Coffee & Doughnuts)
10:15	Opening Remarks
10:30	**Stroik, Thomas**: "Language Planning in English Education Programs" (Morehead State Univ., KY)
11:00	**Silva, Marilyn**: "Grammar as Method, not as a Subject" (California State University, Hayward, CA)
11:30	**De Jong, Verna**: "A Grammar for Teachers" (Northwestern College, Orange City, IA)
12:00	Lunch (le Jeune Chef) Speaker: **Peters, Frank**: "Using Humor to Teach Grammar" (Bloomsburg University)
1:30	**Kenkel, Jim**: "On the Limitations of School Grammars" (Eastern Kentucky University) & **Yates, Robert**, (Central Missouri State University)
2:00	**Kirkpatrick, Carolyn**: "A Grammar for Editing" (York College, CUNY)
2:30	**Adams, Peter**: "Reducing Error in Student Writing" (Essex Community College, Baltimore, MD)
3:00	Social Break: Move to ATHS 207
3:30	**Schlieper, Reinhold**: "Some Ideas about Computational Tools, Grammar, and the Teaching of Writing" (Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Florida)
4:00	**Vavra, Ed**: "The Crime, or What We Need to Know about Students' Writing"
4:30	Open Forum : What Should a High School Graduate Know about Grammar? **Kolln, Martha**, moderator
5:30	Dinner Break (on your own)
7:30	Business Meeting: "The Future of ATEG"

Friday, June 19th

8:30	Coffee
9:00	**Deakins, Alice**: "Grammar for Writers: The Pedagogy of Commas & Periods" (Wm. Paterson College)
	& **Viscount, Robert** (Kingsborough Community College, CUNY)
9:30	**Hall, Mary**: "Writing Skills vs. Writing Skill: An Ambiguity Feeding Arguments about Assessing" (University of Pittsburgh at Titusville)
10:00	**Harris, David**: "Logical Grammar" (Tompkins Cortland Community College, NY)
10:30	Break
11:00	**Paraskevas, Cornelia**: "Grammar Portfolios" Western Oregon State University
11:30	**Oliver, George**: "Grammar: A Linguist's Point of View" (University of Maryland)
12:00	Lunch (on your own)
1:30	**Gilbert, Janet**: "Language in Orbit: Revisitng the Relative Clause" (Delta College, MI)
2:00	**Kolln, Martha**: "Separating Grammar from Error" (Penn State University)
2:30	**Talbott, Victoria**: "From Experience to Application: Learning to Teach ESL Grammar" (Western Washington University, Intl. English Language Institute)
3:00	**Farrar, Bernice**: "Beyond Coloring" (Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada)
3:30	Closing Session: Next year's Conference
3:45	End of Conference