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IMPLICATIONS OF STRUCTURE IN LANGUAGE FOR THE TEACHING OF READING.

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THE USEFULNESS OF MODERN GRAMMAR, PARTICULARLY OF KNOWLEDGE OF LANGUAGE PATTERNS, IN FACILITATING READING EFFICIENCY IS CONSIDERED IN A DISCUSSION OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF STRUCTURE IN LANGUAGE FOR THE TEACHING OF READING. THE FOLLOWING TOPICS ARE DISCUSSED--(1) THE DUAL CONCEPT OF MEANING, (2) THE FOUR STAGES OF LANGUAGE STRUCTURE (SOUNDS, PHONETICS AND SPELLING, SYNTAX OR GRAMMAR AND RHETORIC OR COMPOSITION), (3) PHONICS AND THE SOUND-MEANING APPROACH, (4) STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS AND VOCABULARY, (5) AWARENESS OF STRUCTURE AND READING EASE, (6) MODERN WRITING VS. CLASSICAL RHETORIC, (7) TRADITIONAL GRAMMAR VS. TRANSFORMATIONAL OR GENERATIVE GRAMMAR, AND (8) LINGUISTIC CONCEPTS. SOURCES FOR LINGUISTIC THEORY AS APPLIED TO READING AND LINGUISTICALLY BASED MATERIALS FOR CLASSROOM USE ARE GIVEN. A FOUR-PAGE SUMMARY OF MODERN GRAMMAR IN OUTLINE FORM IS INCLUDED. THIS PAPER WAS TO BE PRESENTED AT THE NATIONAL READING CONFERENCE (SAINT PETERSBURG, DECEMBER 3, 1966). (LS)

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IMPLICATIONS OF STRUCTURE IN LANGUAGE FOR THE TEACHING OF READING

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The primary purpose in reading is to extract "meaning" from written language. This statement, so trite that it is often skipped in a study of reading, still contains the "reason for being" behind all reading teaching. and the existence of such organizations as the National Reading Conference. My purpose, in this discussion, is to reconsider the base in the hope that some fundamentals which have been slighted may still be valid.

Primary in the difficulty is the double concept of the word "meaning." Because it is customary to use the same word for both ideas, there often is a elision of process which omits an essential step. Meaning both semantic meaning that is recognizing the idea for which a word is the symbol and total meaning re-creating as nearly as possible the exact concept which the author intended as he wrote. Between this "getting the gist" and communication there exists a third ingredient--structure in language.

Language is made up of words, which are symbols for ideas; but it is also made up of a series of understandable structures. To understand writing--to read--these structures are an important element. Because these structures are so important, teachers of reading have made use of them, but this use has often been pragmatic and incidental. A re-thinking of the teaching of reading, taking into account the important elements of structure, should be profitable both for the theoritican and for the active classroom teacher.

A survey of the literature on the teaching of reading gives a very scant picture of the importance of structure in meaningful reading. The two best known books presenting some of the implications from the study of linquistics

on the teaching of reading (Lefevre's *LINGUISTICS AND THE TEACHING OF READING* and Fries' *LINGUISTICS AND READING*) make suggestions of this nature, and most of the standard textbooks and workbooks make use of some of the principles of structure in the reading programs which they suggest. However, there does not appear to be in print a discussion which brings together ideas about the patterns of the language and the application of these patterns to improved reading.

Language is composed in four stages and ascending complication; the step from one stage to the next is a system. A clear understanding of these systems can make reading a simpler process; therefore a teacher of reading should consider the systems in teaching reading technique.

The sounds--that is, the noises which signal differences in meaning [pat, sat, gat.] The sounds are symbolized in writing by graphemes or letters. In English, analphabetic language, the sounds are written to form words.

The system here is called phonetics and spelling.

The words of the language--the groups of sound [graphemes in writing] which have come to symbolize specific ideas.

The system here is called syntax or grammar.

The sentence--groups of words put together to communicate concepts.

The system here is call rhetoric.

The compostion--groups of sentences assembled into paragraphs and larger units of communication.

Under the name of phonics and in a rather reversed fashion [since in phonics the grapheme (or written symbol) is the basis for classification instead of the sounds themselves--which are fewer in number and are more fundamental in communication] the patterns of sound are covered in most modern reading instruction. It is sad that many school systems have seen fit to adopt presentations which do not take into consideration the advances in understanding language made during the past two decades, but at least most primary teachers do present sound as a basis word recognition. In the past five years, however, great strides have been made in understanding the relationship between speaking and spelling. No longer is it necessary to present [in point of fact, it is now criminal] English spelling as a chaotic

and happen-chance affair which can be conquered only by rote memory. There are patterns in sound-spelling which make English a largely phonetic language--that is one which is written as it is said. [The basic principles on which much of this work is based was suggested by Robert A. Hall, *SOUND AND SPELLING IN ENGLISH* (Chilton, 1961). These concepts have been put into school room form in such texts as the SRA reading series, the McGraw Hill-Sullivan Series, or the D.C. Heath Miami Series.] Despite the fact that the sound-meaning approach is of limited use in adult and college reading programs, recent innovations in seeing the orderly system which exists, merit close attention from the reading expert.

In the words of the language, or the semantics, it has long been the practice to teach the importance of structural analysis. One of the chief methods for presenting vocabulary has been a study of affixation--the importance of prefixes and suffixes in the understanding of a multi-syllable word. A primary misconcept, however, has made this instruction more difficult than it need be: the suffix is only rarely a unit of meaning but is, instead, a unit of grammar or part of speech. In the normal classroom presentation, the four words--*atom, atomic, atomically, and atomize*--have each been accompaned with a separate definition. In point of fact, there is really no meaningful difference in referent among these words. The base idea--small particle--is the same; the difference comes merely in the part of speech signalled by the suffix. The common element--the root word--gives the semantic meaning; this idea is all the definition necessary. Differences in grammar do not result in differences in idea conveyed; these variations are of use in understanding the meaning of the sentence but not in the understanding of the word itself. In many reading workbooks, stress is placed upon the interchangeability of parts of speech; such emphasis could well be the chief point when the principle of the suffix is taught.

In the area of rhetoric (the structure of the largest units of communication--composition) considerable emphasis is placed upon structure in manuals of instruction and in reading textbooks. Such instruction is usually found under the heading of "scanning"; it consists of directions about how to ascertain the meaning of a "story" or "article" without reading all the words in the passage. Devices such as "topic sentence, transition, structural prediction, illustration, and summary" are used as springboards to quick understanding. In

point of fact, such teaching usually uses the structure of the exposition as its point of departure, and that decision has practicality because much of the reading which one does (unless he is reading for pleasure when he does not want to shorten the process) is discussion of fact or opinion. There are, however, other forms of writing which have structure and in which the understanding of the basic plan of the whole will contribute to facility in reading.

In reality, the use of the expository pattern for the scanning of types of writing other than exposition often results in misunderstanding. The exposition is designed to examine the evidence, both pro and con, about a given topic and to draw conclusions from the evidence examined. On the other hand, the argumentation is designed to present only the evidence for or against an idea. Scanning an argumentation from the frame of an expostion makes the conclusion from the presentation seem much more authoritative that it actually is--the evidence seems preponderant. Again, realization of the basic patterns inherent in the "personal essay," puts what is being said into the proper prospective [sic.] since the pattern makes clear that the purpose is to expose the writer's mind rather than his facts.

On the other hand, it is perfectly clear that much modern writing is not being done according to the textbook rules of classical rhetoric, and often the English teacher insists on a form which really is not there. A number of scholars are working on the patterns of modern rhetoric; from their work may well come a revision of patterns which can be incorporated into reading instruction. [See Kenneth Burke and his disciples. An interesting example of modern rhetoric is W. Ross Wenterowd's new *RHETORIC & WRITING* (Allyn and Bacon, 1966)].

In the field of syntactical or grammatical structures little precept or practice is given in most reading instruction. Such experience as occurs with different sentence patterns is pragmatic; there may well be a sentence followed by a series of sentences which are variations on the words in the original sentence. The instruction is to tell whether the exercise sentences agree or disagree with the first one. The aim is worthwhile, but decisions are made on an instinctive, subrational level where improvement is the result of rote experience.

In one sense, all of the following sentences mean the same thing:

The visiting teacher gave the lecture close attention.
The visiting teacher gave close attetion to the lecture.
It was the visiting teacher who gave close attention to the lecture.
The lecture was given close attention by the visiting teacher.
Close attention the visiting teacher gave the lecture.
To the lecture the visiting teacher gave close attention.

Viewed more realistically, however, although all are about the same idea, they do not say the same thing. Within the framework of the "old grammar" differences were labeled "style," and style was instinctive, the result of arbitrary choice. [This is not to say that in the old grammar each of these could not be analyzed as different patterns, but the patterns existed; they were inherently connected neither with the purpose of the writer or the effect on the reader.] With the framework of the New English, the first sentence, above, is a basic sentence; the others are variation [or transformation], each in a recognizable pattern and done for a recognizable effect.

The terminology current in grammatical instruction during the years of development of reading instruction as a school tool [and during the training period of many "reading experts"] may be a reason grammar has contributed so little to reading instruction. It is perfectly possible to discuss music of "the big beat" with the classical vocabulary of Bach; it is possible to give instruction for the manufacture of plastic furniture with the "hammer, saw and chisel" of the wood-carpenter, but the communication is not very efficient, and the verbal picture is apt to be unflattering because so many negatives result from the dis-similarity. In much the same way, classical grammar can discuss English, but the language is often the esoteric jargon of the specialist, and the traditionalist finds himself disapproving much that he finds in modern writing because "it does not follow the rules."

Within recent years the development of a linguistically oriented system of discussing the structure of English has made it possible to substitute logic for much of the rote memory so often typical of the old grammar class. Some modern grammarians still present the facts of language structure as interesting little parlor tricks which can be done in speech or writing, but

others are working out a system in which "the reason for" accompanies the "existence of" the principles of language generation. This system is by no means complete. There is even less aggreement on terminology among the "new " syntactians than among the "old." However, if modern grammar does what it sets out to do, it describes how language does work; and grammatical philosophers have furnished insight into "why it works like it does." Many of the concepts of modern grammar offer clues which can help a reader to understand what he reads.

English, written or spoken, is composed of structures. Some of the words in the structure are the beams and rafters--they carry the idea burden of the communication [these are called content words]; others are the nails and the bolts which hold the communication together [these are the function words which have only grammatic significance.] An expectation that these latter words will have "meaning" simply confuses the reader; they cannot be defined in any terms except structural. Try, if you will, to "define" the meaning difference among "but,""however," and "since."

These content and function words are combined, by syntax, into sentences. The sentences are designed to convey concepts of varying complexity. Overpowering in the traditional English Class has been the demand of "correctness" whether or not the form of the words used followed conventional patterns. In the evangelical fervor of the dedicated teacher, the "nit-picking" about the case of a promoun was often more important than clearness of communication. Nobody ever misunderstood "It was me" while "The teacher asked each of the students to find his notes" was never clear. The new grammar presents principles by which communicatory symbols may be recorded and relegates to it's proper (and important place) the details of "upper middle class dialect" by which the educated person makes known the fact that he belongs to society.

Traditional grammar is at best, a system by which that which has been written may be proof-read. The new grammar, generative in its purpose, presents a system by which ideas and concepts may be recorded, altered, transformed and combined, in order to say precisely what the writer has in mind. I do not contend that a study of the new grammar is either easy or simple. The books by some of the savant "mames" in the field appear to have been written in the Cabot and Lodge principle; if the author has communicated

with a child or a filling station attendant recently, he certainly has abandoned the technique when he talks about grammar. But writing is done well by combining words into recognizable structures of syntax [forget Freshman English when "correct grammar" was the ability to choose between "who" and "whom" and recognizing when to put a period over the comma to get a semicolon], and reading is the reverse of writing. The reader must recognize the significance of the structure present and then fill the structure with the ideas the words symbolize.

The thesis being presented here is that a reader can understand, both more quickly and more efficiently, a sentence when he recognizes the pattern in which it is written and knows the purpose of that pattern. It is further suggested that, within the framework of "modern grammar" there are a number of concepts which could give real insight into the meaning of reading, and that there is real opportunity for a reading teacher to investigate those concepts and construct teaching devices which will be of considerable help to students.

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A BRIEF [and fragmentary] SUMMARY OF MODERN GRAMMAR

English shows its grammar in three ways:

Word Order (dominant)--the place, or slot, which a word fills in sentence

Inflection (being decreased) change in spelling and/or pronunciation to show grammar.

Function Word--special words having no external meaning and designed only to show relationships.

Markers are 'signs' carried by words to show their grammar

Some markers are affixes; they usually tell the part of speech as well as sometimes other ideas. Two words, one with an 's'. If the 's' is on the first, it is a plural noun and the second is a verb. If the 's' is on the second, the first is a singular noun and the second is a verb. end in 'ic' is a modifier-adjective. end in 'ly' is a modifier-adverb. end in 'ize' is a vert. etc.-

Some markers are function words. The head word following a preposition is a noun. The head word following 'a,' 'an,' and 'the' [determiners] is a noun.

The elements of a communication may be divided into words [symbols for some sort of idea] and phrases [more than a single word, all of which symbolize an idea].

Phrases are of two kinds:

headed phrases--groups of words symbolizing an idea in which one word [called the head word] could do the grammatic job of the whole phrase: *the feeble old Indian man--could have been walking*. [have fixed word order]

headless phrases--groups of words symbolizing an idea (which must be used together--in clumps) but there is no head word in the phrase. *to town, when it came, who was here, walking home, him to ask favors, etc.*

Words are divided into two groups:

Content words--which refer to or symbolize some idea, quality or action, which have meaning in themselves, which have a referent--they symbolize something outside the individual --full words.

Substantives--nouns--name words. Subdivisions are count and non-count, common and proper, mass--all divisions probably made to show definiteness.

Action words--verbs--words which show action or provide for an expenditure of energy. The word BE acts as this group does in many ways, but because it is so different, it is considered as a separate class.

Modifiers--words designed to alter the meaning of one of the two previous classes. When the word is used with a noun it is called an adjective; when it is used with a verb it is called an adverb. Much of these classes are interchangeable, but sometimes they carry part of speech markers [in a few cases there are pairs of words--*good and well*]. The difference is significant only in distinguishing between two and three slot sentences [see later discussion] or in the rare cases when word order does not make the modification clear. *slow schools--slowly schools*

Function words--sometimes called **empty words**. Their only 'meaning' is reflected from the **words around them**. They **are** designed to show grammar **and not meaning.**

Pronouns--place holders--they are words which can take the slot of a noun, but they only occupy the place and take any meaning which they have from the noun replaced, called the antecedent,

Auxiliaries--these words, usually at one time real action words, may be added to a verb to make specific or definite some grammatic idea about the action; together the auxiliary + the verb form a headed phrase.

Tensifiers--words used with modifiers to make specific the degree of modification. They, too, were most often once modifiers, but now they merely show plus or increase [intensifiers] and decrease (detensifiers]. There is a dominant pattern called comparison, but other words not falling into a pattern do much the same job: *much, very, quite, pretty, etc.*

Determiners--words which make the following head word a noun: *a, an, the, this, that, personal pronouns, etc.*

Prepositions--words designed, in the most part, to show case; prepositions 'hook' one word, called the object to another word in the sentence.

Connectives--linkers, designed to show relationship between ideas in the sentence. Characteristic relationships shown are equlity-inequality and positive and negative. Both these words and prepositinns are designed to be vague, definite, or very definite in the relationship which they show. Some other words may do a double duty; as well as being connectives, they may serve another purpose. Pronouns such as *who and these;* adverbs such as *when and since* are examples.

Emotion words--interjections--howlers--show feeling and neither meaning or grammar.

Words are combined into larger units called sentences. In English there is one dominant pattern [about 90% of the cases] and several minor patterns. Minor patterns are following different structure than the major one; they are not, thereby, non-sentences.

Minor sentence patterns include

equative--*Like father, like son. Rome, rum, ruin (slogan)*

reportive *42-22-40. 6'4" 180 lbs.*

answers-- *Third house on the right.*

exclamatory-- *John, Principal.*

Actor-Action Pattern--the major pattern.

Such a sentence depends on the fact that there are four slots in an English sentence pattern; not all must be filled before the sentence is complete.

The basic slots in the English Sentence are

ACTOR	ACTION	GOAL 1	GOAL 2
ignorant Principal	*quickly from home gave*	*his favorite*	*a big raise which she did not deserve*

Modification rules.

1. Add single words before the words they modify
2. Add headed phrases after the word they modify
3. Indicate violations of these rules with commas.

Basic Sentence Patterns

ONE SLOT Sentences--either an ACTOR or an ACTION--may have modifier.

Actor--*Lordy--Good Lordy* usually vulgar or profane.

Action *Help--Help quickly* modifier comes after action word.

TWO SLOT Sentences--An ACTOR and an ACTION, may have modifiers. If there is a one word modifier of the action, it usually comes last.

With a verb *John walks [quickly]*
[fat old]men eat [slowly]

With the non-verb *God is* (possible, not good)

THREE SLOT sentences--the ACTOR and the GOAL may refer to the same item or different items.

(1) $N_1 + V + N_2$ A *The coke hit the spot.*
B *The tired teacher hurried home*

(2) $N_1 + V + \begin{matrix} N_1 \\ Adj_1 \end{matrix}$ *The gracious teacher is a lady.*
The superintendent is insane.

BE may be used only in Pattern (2) *I am the best in town.*

FOUR SLOT Sentences--All four slots are filled; the pattern differs if the GOALS name the same thing or different things.

(1) $N_1 + V + N_2 + N_3$ *The young teacher bought herself a dress.*

(2) $N_1 + V + N_2 + \begin{matrix} N_2 \\ Adj_2 \end{matrix}$ *The young teacher painted her lips red.*

BE cannot be used in a FOUR SLOT Sentence.

Grammatic Problems solved by Basic Sentence Patterns.

The Copulative Verb

Perhaps the fact that this sort of verb is the one used in Three Slot, (2) patterns is a simple way of distinguishing the special usage.

Pair Word--lie-lay, rise-raise, sit-set.

Lie, rise, and sit are only used in Two Slot Sentences.

Lay, raise, and set are only used in Three Slot Sentences.

Verbs of Sensation--feel, seem, and appear, etc.

The peculiarity of these verbs is that they change their meaning; each of the meanings may be used only in one Basic Sentence Pattern.

Two Slot	*He feels badly (with adverb)*
Three Slot (1)	*He feels wood. (2nd noun)*
Three Slot (2)	*He feels bad. (with adjective)*

If -the Two Slot Pattern is completed with an adverb, the adverb must have a distinctive adverb MARKER.

Basic sentence patterns may be made longer (and thereby express more exact or definite ideas) by two processes: SUBSTITUTION and TRANSFORMATION

Substitutions--are made when a headed phrase is substituted for one of the words in a slot. These headed phrases are head words other words, but all express a single idea.

substantives and modifiers *The superintendent bought supplies.*
The easily impressed superintendent bought useless school supplies.

Verbs and auxiliaries *the board hired teachers.*
At the bar-b-q, the board could have been hiring teachers.

Transformations--are changes in basic sentence patterns in order to convey different ideas. The words essentially remain the same; the grammar changes. The difference in ideas is grammatic.

SINGLE SENTENCE TRANSFORMS--changes made in one sentence

Teacher wrote Check------Basic sentence

Emphasis Transforms

Actor emphasis--expletive phrase. *It is the teacher who wrote check.*

Action emphasis--*do* auxiliary. *Teacher did write check.*

Goal emphasis--passive voice. *Check was written by teacher.*

Under Three Slot Patterns (1) that this pattern may be divided into two parts. The division is on the basis of whether or not a Goal Emphasis transform may be made.

(1)a [can make] *Teacher wrote check*
Check was written by teacher.

(1)b [cannot make] *Teacher walked home.*

Question Transforms

Leading Question--'yes' or 'no' answer.

Rising inflection-- *Teacher wrote the check?*

Function word *Teacher wrote the check, did'nt she?*

Auxiliary first-- a two step transform--first substitute a headed phrase for the verb.

Teacher did write the check.

Then put the tense bearing auxiliary first.

Did the teacher write the check?

Information Getting Question--requires sense answer.

Substitute a Question Word for the information wanted.

Who wrote the check?
What did the teacher do to the check?
What did the teacher write?

Negative Transforms

Add not or n't to the auxiliary. Cannot be made with a simple verb but requires a headed phrase substitution.

The teacher didn't write the check.

Certain verbs, which may be auxiliaries or real verbs, can take the negative.

can't, won't, shouldn't, etc.

BE verbs usually can take the negative.

isn't, aren't, wasn't but not amn't [am not]

Periodic Transforms. When, without change in grammar, a word is lifted out of the end of the sentence and put at the beginning.

A check the teacher wrote.
On the bank the teacher wrote a check.

MULTIPLE SENTENCE TRANSFORMS--More than one sentance is combined to show EQUALITY or INEQUALITY--coordination or Subordination. *Teachertook heroin. Teacher lost job.*

COORDINATION TRANSFORMS--the ideas are of equal importance.

Additive--the compound sentence

Teacher took heroin; (and, but, etc.) she lost job.

Parallel--simple sentence with one or more slots duet

Teacher took heroin and lost job.

SUBORDINATION TRANSFORMS--embedding--one sentence is made a part of another by occuping a place in the pattern.

As Modifiers

Of Nouns *Teacher who took heroin lost job.*

Of Verbs *When teacher took heroin, she lost job.*

As a Slot filler

Gerunds, infinitives, and 'noun clauses'

taking heroin--to loose job, that she took heroin.