Fourteen papers collected under three headings--literature, language, and composition--consider what lies ahead in the teaching of elementary school English. Papers on literature cover the role of literature in elementary English programs (Alan S. Downer), the necessity for developing the student's imagination (James E. Miller, Jr.), the nature of the analytic process in studying literature (Roy Harvey Pearce), and the relationship between the "knowledge explosion" and the values of traditional literature (Edward W. Rosenheim, Jr.). Papers on language treat what children need to know about language (Ruth G. Strickland), the distinction between competence and performance in language (Owen Thomas), the limitations of imitation in language acquisition (Philip B. Gough), sentence growth as explained by transformational generative grammar (Kellog W. Hunt), system and variety in American English (Raven I. McDavid, Jr.), problems of Negro speakers of nonstandard English (William Labov), and E. E. Cummings' creative manipulation of grammar (Priscilla Tyler). Three papers on composition discuss teaching the process of writing, the place of rhetoric in the preparation of composition teachers (both by Wallace W. Douglas), and the interrelationship of composition and literature in the elementary grades (Eldonna L. Evertts). (LH)

# New Directions in Elementary English

**PAPERS COLLECTED FROM THE 1966 SPRING INSTITUTES
ON THE ELEMENTARY LANGUAGE ARTS OF THE
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH**

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# Foreword

What lies ahead in the teaching of English in the elementary school? For teachers and others concerned with the education of children, finding answers to this question is of great and growing interest.

Thus the 1966 Spring Institute Series of the National Council of Teachers of English was designed to elicit help from distinguished scholars in what the planners of the series thought to be relevant fields of knowledge. These scholars were invited to address themselves to content in their own areas which seemed to them to be valuable background for those thinking about the shape of a new curriculum for younger learners. As we planned the institutes, we sought to staff them with general consultants and local chairmen who could assist in helping participants consider the implications of the background papers.

These papers have now been collected from the Institute Series for study by a wider audience. An introductory statement sets the stage for each of the three sections into which the papers have been organized.

The cochairmen of the institutes wish to recognize the contribution made by the general consultants and local chairmen to the success of the series. Their names follow:

*Atlanta Institute.* General consultant: Miriam E. Wilt, Professor of Education, Temple University. Local chairmen: Juanita Abernathy, Reading and English Consultant, Georgia State Department of Education, and Bernice Freeman, Curriculum Director, Troup County Schools, La Grange, Georgia.

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*Chicago Institute.* General consultants: Helen K. Mackintosh, Arlington, Virginia, and Walter J. Moore, Professor of Elementary Education, University of Illinois. Local chairman: Richard E. Hodges, Assistant Professor of Education, University of Chicago.

*Omaha Institute.* General consultant: Patrick J. Groff, Professor of Education and English, San Diego (California) State College. Local chairman: Lloyd R. Richards, English Coordinator, Omaha Public Schools.

*Santa Barbara Institute.* General consultant: William A. Jenkins, Associate Dean of the School of Education, University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee. Local chairman: Bernard Moulton, English Coordinator, Lompoc Unified School District, Lompoc, California.

# Contents

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# The Study of Literature

# The Study of Literature

A new concern for strengthening the program of literature study in the elementary school is everywhere evident. Increasingly eager to build their reading programs on a broader base of books, supported by the upsurge in the publication of children's books, and heartened by the growth of libraries in their schools under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, a great many teachers are seeking ways to make sure that encounters between children and a richer reading environment are fully rewarding.

Help in thinking through ways to improve the study of literature with children is coming from varied sources. Some of the English Curriculum Centers, scattered strategically across the country, are working on the literature program with associated schools in their regions. Forward-looking school systems are rapidly redeveloping their own programs. A number of state departments of education are sponsoring large-scale revisions of their English curricula. Individually, leading literary critics and scholars are counseling on how a program of elementary school literature study should be set up.

Much of the help is centered on the problem of selecting a framework for the study of literature. Should works from the great heritage of the past form the basis of the curriculum? Should children be introduced to the types or genre of literature, perhaps with an emphasis for younger children on types of oral literature—myths, legends, folktales, fables, and the like? Should literature be organized instead, or possibly in addition, around large themes that may be thought to have served as threads throughout the literary effort of man to shape and share his experience, themes like courage, wonder, and romance?

Answers to such questions are needed, of course, in organizing a program of study. However, in planning the series of institutes from which these papers have been collected, it was decided to try to provide help with another major problem. Within any framework, the question arises of how to deal with a given work of literature. What is characteristic of serious literary study, of the study of literature as a discipline?

In order to answer these questions, we invited scholars distinguished in literary criticism to explain to elementary teachers "the nature of the critical or analytical process in studying literature," to quote from the letter of invitation. "We are not concerned that you consider in your presentation the nature of elementary school children; rather we think

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it important to extend the group's understanding about what literary critics have learned during the past two decades or so about the processes of reading and analyzing literature. . . ." Relating this to the teaching of children was left to the general staff in the institutes; here it is left to each reader of the papers.

What may first strike the reader of the papers by Professors Downer, Miller, Pearce, Rosenheim, and Sutton is the expression of a unanimous and passionate conviction that the study of literature is central to education. Perhaps it is well that such a conviction rings out clear. There may still remain some elementary schools in which attention to literature is unplanned or perfunctory.

Through all the papers run accounts of and comments on the "new" criticism. The analytical, close reading of literary texts is seen as the salient feature of the modern approach. The nature of such study is spelled out in a variety of ways. Altogether, the approach is seen as including explication of the literal meanings of the selection being studied, attention to the choice and arrangement of words and the use of figurative language, analysis of structural and symbolic devices that relate parts or episodes, identification of the generic form of the piece and study of its use in the given instance, and consideration of possible meanings offered by the work beyond the literal level.

Of course, the papers offer much in addition to a definition of this analytical or close reading. Each paper will repay careful study. Professor Miller, for example, proposes ten key "concepts of the imagination" as a structure for developing a curriculum in literature. Professor Rosenheim urges us to "view literature in its reciprocal relations with all other knowledge," possibly as a corrective to too narrow a focus on textual analysis. Professor Downer underlines the function of literature in education of the "enthusiastic passion" toward a needed "renascence of wonder." Professor Pearce ponders the nature of literature as a discipline differing in kind from other fields of study. Professor Sutton outlines a history of modern criticism briefly yet explicitly, recommending a range of books for those wishing to extend their knowledge.

There remains, it is true, the challenge of making use of the insights provided by these papers on terms that we may think of as professionally our own. How can we move, if we decide to do so, toward a more analytical study of literature in the elementary school without running counter to some of our deepest convictions? We want children to continue to delight in books, to respond to good literature with great

joy. The possibility of endangering the experience by overanalyzing it is only one of the perplexities that will arise as we begin to think through a carefully planned program for the study of literature with children varying widely in their reading skills, their interests, and their backgrounds.

But the obligation remains to test our convictions against new insights. If we can learn how to teach literature better so that children become capable of responding to it more fully. . . . Perhaps that is the essence of the professional challenge that now confronts us.

# 1

## The Emperor's Old Clothes:
## Literature in the English Curriculm

### ALAN S. DOWNER

*W*e all know that English is the most basic of all tools a citizen must have to use that this society may survive and advance; without it he cannot read or write or speak or, perhaps, think. To be sure many citizens can't seem to do these things with English—but they are our failures. Unfortunately for our public image, we are not generals; we cannot bury our failures, they grow up to vote.

But where does the study of literature fit in this great basic training for citizenship? Before I can answer that question to my own satisfaction, I had better examine my premises. Literature I take to be the response of an inspired imagination to observation or experience. Further, it is the shaping of that response by skill, discipline, and devotion to make it accessible to an audience. Therefore, my position is conservative, not radical. I prefer the Emperor's old clothes to his new ones. Literature is Shakespeare, not Paddy Chayevsky; it is the bold and brave and daring works, not sentimental and comfortable ones; it is the work of those who would unlock the word hoard, not those who chain themselves to controlled vocabularies and word counts. Literature is hard, demanding, challenging; it liberates from the domestic smother, and opens doors that we may never have noticed into rooms we have never known: rooms in our own houses, sometimes; but also into Valhalla and Olympus.

### Our Task: The Development of Informed Responses

Let me return to earth long enough to point out that I am also aware of the very practical problems of designing a curriculum for the variety of talents and backgrounds that must be shaped into our future citizenry. For example, I am not as ignorant as I may sound about the study of literature in the elementary school. I can remember some of my own

experiences. I have watched the experiences of my son and the children of my colleagues; I have recently had occasion to study widely-used textbooks and teacher's manuals and to consider some of the proposals for improving the curriculum in literature. I hasten to assure you that I am not in favor of improving the curriculum in literature as some kind of methodological busywork, or to keep pace with the new math or the new physics or to reclaim some of the time that is wasted on subjects that are supposed to enrich the school program (though that might not be a bad idea). In fact, I am not supposed to concern myself with the curriculum itself. My assignment is to talk about the study of literature: for every teacher of English, kindergarten through A.B., must be first of all a dedicated and responsible student of literature, which is to say: a practising *critic*.

In using the term critic I am not trying to be pretentious, nor am I suggesting something from whose implications you may draw back in protest. I am not proposing that we all set up in business as Aristotles or Edmund Wilsons. There are many kinds and degrees of criticism, and the one I am concerned with is the informed response to a work of literature by an experienced reader. I am sure that many of you practice this kind of criticism readily, and it is certainly within reach of all of us.

And some of you, products of a college generation much younger than mine, may very well wonder if the study of literature can be anything other than the development of informed responses.

Let me, to paraphrase Ethel Merman, disabuse you.

## Literary Study as Biography and History

The men who taught me literature in college had in turn been taught that literature was more properly called philology and the useful things to explore were the subjunctive in Ben Jonson or the survival of Westumbrian dialects in John Gower. Or if they were very radical scholars indeed, they took just the slightest notice that these collections of philological data had sometimes a plot which involved characters and sentiments, and daringly they went in search of sources in earlier cultures, influences from other authors, or parallels wherever they could ferret them out. You will notice that both philologists and source-hunters are resolutely looking away from what we would call the real object, the work of literature they should be examining.

But these men were products of the nineteenth century, the Darwinian century, the century of cause and effect. As literary scholars they were victims of the century's delusion that there was something sacred in

Scientific Method and that if Man was the by-product of Evolution, everything else had better be too. Oscar Wilde might assure the scholars that Nature imitates art; they listened only to Hamlet and then confused him with Thomas Huxley. They were thus sitting ducks for the next scientific formulation, the Freudian concept of human behavior. Some of the older scholars were more than a little shocked at the new tools they were expected to employ (sex was more sensational than species), but they would not deny the call of science, and waded boldly into Freudian analysis of the characters of Mark Twain and the character of Sam Clemens. Psychological criticism had at least this advantage: analysts were forced to read more closely the works they were analyzing, and so observe particular characters and precise actions, though generally to try to reduce them to some psychiatric stereotype.

Still, it was rather pathetic. The so-called literary scholars were traveling all over the academic world in search of riches and ignoring the acres of diamonds on their own bookshelves. They had heard and envied the scientists stunned by the perfections they had discovered. When Kepler completed the evidence that established his third law of planetary motion, he wrote:

> When I prophecied two and twenty years ago, that for which I devoted the best part of my life to astronomical contemplations, I have brought to light, and recognized its truth beyond my most sanguine expectations. It is not eighteen months since I got the first glimpse of light, three months since the dawn, very few days since the unveiled sun burst upon me. Nothing holds me; I will indulge my sacred fury. If you forgive me, I rejoice; if you are angry, I can bear it. The die is cast, the book is written, to be read either now or by posterity, I care not which. It may well wait a century for a reader, as God has waited 6,000 years for an observer.[1]

You can hardly blame the literary scholars for seeking methods that would bring them the same rapture, the same sacred fury.

When I began my studies at Harvard, then, literature was still the handmaiden of biography and history. The first book my tutor assigned for reading was *The Social Backgrounds of English Literature*. But when I began teaching, a quarter century ago, I was introduced to Brooks and Warren and, like Drinkwater in *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*:

> "Yer dunno wot them books [was] to me .... They formed maw mawnd."

### Birth of New Criticism

Under the influence of Brooks and Warren I went from writing an essay on "Marlowe his own Hero" to an elaborate study of the tensions, ironies, and image patterns in Addison's *Cato*. From one arid and airy

ignorance to another, I daresay. Brooks and Warren retailored the teaching of poetry. They designed the pattern of the Emporer's new clothes, and it is perhaps only the old and innocent who are willing to call attention to the insubstantial nature of them, for all their articulate concern with the haute couture of literary study, the verbal gussets and metaphorical pleats, and patterns cut on the bias.

I don't intend to denigrate Brooks and Warren or the new critics; like the greater prophets, the founders of the new criticism are the victims of their disciples. Cleanth Brooks is no more responsible for the *Explicater* than Sir Walter Raleigh is responsible for lung cancer.

The Emperor's new clothes, this neo-new criticism, that was intended to reintroduce close reading, frequently ended in closed reading—only this and nothing else, because: as if the critic were a geometrician. There is after all a vast difference between Euclid and Julius Caesar Scaliger. Scaliger was laying down laws, antefacto; Euclid was at least trying to prove (test) something when he embarked on his step-by-step analysis of a theorem.

In addition to producing the *closed reading*, the neo-new critics tended to set too high a premium on technical perfection, scorning those flawed works whose very flaws proclaim them as a necessary part of the true image of man. Because Joyce Kilmer was confused about female anatomy, no one could read "Trees" without scornful laughter. Yet art historians have looked with respect on Italian primitive painters who, for reasons we can only guess, had an intriguing innocence about what Adam's rib developed into. Neo-new critics, further, tended to set too high a premium on works which responded in ingenuity in interpretation or analysis—confronted with Pope or Tennyson or Sir John Davies, they could only say, "There is some doubt whether they are poetry," and return to their microscopic examination of Donne, Marvell, or Wallace Stevens.

### Reasons for Studying Literature

I began looking through the wardrobe to see what old clothes the Emperor had discarded, wondering with Macduff whether the old clothes might not be better fitting than the new. To see what critics and teachers in past ages might have professed which could more properly define the place of literature in the modern curriculum of general education.

There are, of course, many easy answers.

You study literature to learn how to express yourself—but that means reading Ben Franklin, not John Keats.

You study literature to confront the collective wisdom of mankind, but that wisdom can more readily be discovered in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, which we officially deplore as an "instrument," something which is not literature. The study of literature, we are told, is different from the study of philosophy or history, even though the texts are surprisingly alike.

You study literature to understand more fully the work in hand. With this one can hardly quarrel, though it raises a number of interesting side issues. For instance, why *this* work, why teach *Silas Marner?* The answer is often that it is in the anthology; you teach it because it's there (the Everest fallacy). What can the "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" mean to a midcentury Kansas farmboy (the environmental fallacy)? The answer is often that Coleridge was a great poet and "Mariner" is one of the few things he finished (the historical fallacy). Why belabor a potential dropout with *Hamlet?* The answer, and I have heard it, is that *Hamlet* is full of great quotations (the Bartlett fallacy).

I suggest that the study of literature can be justified because it (of all disciplines) *encourages* a passionate involvement in the great theatre of the world, in fact of humanity. This is, I recognize, a very old garment indeed, and one often revived and refurbished. I would like to call your attention to one version not widely familiar. In the early years of the eighteenth century, a critic wrote:

> [A poet must everywhere excite great passion of which there are two sorts.] *First,* Vulgar Passion, or that which we commonly call passion, is that which is moved by the Objects themselves, or by the Ideas in the ordinary Course of life—I mean, that common society which we find in the world. As, for example, Anger is moved by an affront that is offered us in our presence, or by the relation of one; Pity by the sight of a mournful object, or the relation of one; Admiration or wonder . . . by the sight of a strange Object, or the relation of one. But,
>
> *Secondly,* Enthusiastic Passion, or Enthusiasm, is a passion which is moved by the ideas in contemplation, or the meditation of things that belong not to common life . . . . Ideas in meditation are often very different from what ideas of the same objects are in the course of common conversation. As for example, the Sun mentioned in ordinary conversation, gives the idea of a round flat shining body, of about two feet in diameter. But the sun occurring to us in meditation gives the Idea of a vast and glorious Body, and the top of all visible Creation, and the Brightest material image of the divinity. Thus there are two sorts of Passions to be raised in Poetry, the Vulgar and the Enthusiastic; to which last, the Vulgar is preferable, because all men are capable of being moved by the Vulgar, and a poet writes to all: But

the Enthusiastic are more subtle, and thousands have no feeling and no notion of them.

It is gratuitous to point out to an audience of English teachers that "vulgar" is rooted in the common man while "En*thus*iastic" is rooted in the divine. And there are a thousand instances in history, and in literature itself, of individual or mass reaction to the Vulgar Passion: King Claudius at *The Mousetrap*. Something had happened to these individuals as a result of their exposure to a literary experience. John Donne could preach that no man is an island, but through experience these individuals joined, as it were, in the larger march of mankind; which is at least the beginning of wisdom. And the experience was derived from the poetic transmutation of observed reality. The vulgar passion: common enough indeed.

### Education for Enthusiastic Passion

As the eighteenth century critic pointed out, the enthusiastic is less common, and therefore less easy to define and illustrate. Wordsworth is not, perhaps, the most widely respected of critics, but he may start us off: "In the *higher* poetry, an enlightened critic chiefly looks for the reflection of the wisdom of the heart and the grandeur of the imagination: of genius . . . the only infallible sign is the widening of the sphere of human sensibility, for the delight, honor, and benefit of human nature." If these are elusive terms, we may look for a more perspicuous statement from that man who was too rational ever to have been himself a creative artist: Francis Bacon.

> Narrative Poesy . . . seems to be raised altogether from a noble foundation, which makes much for the dignity of man's nature. For seeing the sensible world is in dignity inferior to the soul of man, Poesy seems to endow human nature with that which History denies, and to give satisfaction to the mind, with at least the Shadow of Things, where the Substance cannot be had. For if the matter be thoroughly considered, a strong argument may be drawn from Poetry that a more stately greatness of Things, a more perfect Order, and a more beautiful variety, delights the soul of man than can be any way found in nature, since the fall . . . .
>
> Because true history, through the frequent satiety and similitude of things, works a distaste and misprision in the mind of man, Poetry cheereth and refresheth the soul; chanting things rare and various, and full of vicissitudes. So as Poetry serveth and confereth to delectation, magnanimity, and morality; and . . . it may seem deservedly to have some participation of divineness—because it doth raise the Mind, and exalt the Spirit with high raptures, by proportioning the Shows of things to the desires of the mind, and not submitting the mind to things as reason [philosophy] and history do.

Bacon, of course, is concerned with the creative process, while we are concerned with the reaction to what is created, the enthusiastic passion: a combination of delectation, magnanimity, and morality.

Delectation and morality we can take for granted. Magnanimity is a word which has lost, alas, its innocence; a magnanimous gesture is often today merely a political strategem. Our heroes are antiheroes, and in a recent AP question on a poem by John Davies, "candidates usually had difficulties only with the soul." Hardly surprising, now that it has emerged upon the couch as the *psyche*.

You will remember that in one of Tennessee Williams' plays the hero displays an anatomical chart and challenges the heroine to locate the soul. She gives up, but we must not. It is the soul which can be possessed, enlarged, made *magnanimous*, by the enthusiastic passion. And of all qualities, perhaps true magnanimity is most needed in these young people who are about to inherit the earth.

Without magnanimity how long can we respond to, or contain, the violence of our world, or the literature which poses as its mirror? How can we view with objectivity the heroes of Mr. Williams who are driven insane, castrated, or cannibalized; or of the absurdists who feed dog biscuits to parents housed in ashcans, murder husbands from giant ant-hills, or worship evil as the only proof of existence; or the beat poets who howl; or the novelists who hurl manure at their readers? Will we be misled into hailing these works as epiphanies, revealing, illuminating, showing faith, or will we recognize them as providing orgasms for souls afflicted with pernicious anemia?

With all the other unhappy analogies between our culture and that of ancient Rome as it prepared itself for Gibbon, are we to add an insatiable appetite for the literary pleasures satirized by Petronius, and illustrated in Suetonius's accounts of the degenerate Roman stage? How much longer will our audiences tolerate the descending curtain which deprives them of the actual rape of Blanche duBois or the actual castration of Chance Wayne? Ingmar Bergman has already kept the curtain up (or the camera eye open) a little longer in *The Silence*. Adult movies now reveal all the things you would have thought adults might be a little bored with. Adult plays are those that only begin with adultery and move out—and down. Is our stage, our literature, the mirror of man, or the mirror in a funhouse, exaggerating certain features at the expense of the whole?

**Literary Study: The Most Important Experience in Education**

If our literature will not bring us to enthusiasm, where shall we turn?

Each key turned by the scientist only opens the door to a bleaker prospect.

Each analysis by a psychiatrist only confirms our bestiality.

The historian looks on and says, without passion, that's the way it was.

It sometimes seems as if only *The Boy Scout Handbook* looks upon magnanimity as a human possibility.

No. Let me be as bold as I am biased: the study of literature is the single most important experience in the educational process. It alone can lead to the vulgar passion, and from the vulgar to the enthusiastic. It can lead, in another discarded phrase, to a renascence of wonder. It is at this point that I am eager to employ close reading, the analysis of structure and pattern, the search for metaphorical levels of meaning, the tensions and ironies and paradoxes of literature, for close reading should lead to a sense of order and a sense of style, the wonder at the *poetic* process itself: creation by man of the poetic reality.

Sören Kierkegaard, a philosopher who looked almost too constantly into himself, describes very vividly his response to an experience analogous to the creation of the vulgar passion in literature:

His father was a very severe man, apparently dry and prosaic, but under this rough coat he concealed a glowing imagination which even old age could not quench. When Johannes occasionally asked of him permission to go out, he generally refused to give it, though once in a while he proposed instead that Johannes should take his hand and walk back and forth in the room . . . . While they went back and forth in the room the father described all that they saw; they greeted passersby, carriages rattled past them and drowned the father's voice; the cake-woman's goodies were more enticing than ever. He described so accurately, so vividly, so explicitly even to the least details, everything that was known to Johannes and so fully and perspicuously what was unknown to him, that after half an hour of such a walk with his father he was as much overwhelmed and fatigued as if he had been a whole day out of doors. . . . To Johannes it seemed as if the world were coming into existence during the conversation.[2]

The vulgar passion creates a world. The enthusiastic, the full critical response, develops its possibilities as a *primum mobile*.

The vulgar passion may be aroused by *I Henry IV;* the ladies may be moved by the Byronic sweep of Hotspur, the cynical in us all by the pragmatism of Falstaff. It is only critical analysis that reveals the heart of the matter, the choice that confronts Hal as it confronts all men: to follow the path of Ambition or Vanity, or to pay the debt contracted for him at his birth. Critical study leads us to that sense of general truth, the extensive view which is readily available to those who sit upon

Olympus, where, looking down upon the overwhelming Trojans, Zeus felt understanding in his heart.

### The Function of Close Reading

Vulgar passion, immediate experience, led contemporary audiences to see in Ibsen a defender of woman's rights, an iconoclast, a reformer-in-general. But the playwright himself said simply, "My task is the description of man." The techniques of close reading, discovering the organic relationship of parts, the vigorously beckoning symbols, all lead to the enthusiastic passion, the teeming contemplation in tranquillity which is our birthright.

Why do we admire the play of *Hamlet?* Maybe for its quotations, maybe for its bustle, maybe because we can see in its apparent complexity what we want to see. But analysis of the metaphorical patterns of its language, the selection and arrangement of incidents, the anguish, puzzlements, and small triumphs of the hero, leads us to a contemplation of a gifted and sensitive young man who moves, not through the courts of Denmark, but the courts of death and decay, rejecting (until the antepenultimate moment) the claims that death would lay upon him. The essence of *Hamlet*, of tragic, of great (magnanimous) action, is not that man dies, but that he resists, persists, insists—exists.

The critical study of literature leads ultimately to the sense of wonder encapsulated in that over-familiar verb: *esse;* the wonder not of Holy Dying but of *wholly* living.

The literary experience may be, as Hamlet said, but a fiction, a dream of passion, but there are dreams and dreams. There is Bottom's dream—which hath no bottom to it. There is Adam's dream; he awoke and found it truth. Or Keats', "Gone is the vision, do I wake or sleep"; *i.e.*, the song of the nightingale is ended, but its effect lives on. The wonder and the joy of the full experience of literature, magnanimity, and delectation, can come through an interpretation that respects all relevant evidence, that understands the precision of a literary work; that is: through the process of criticism. And it is the result of that process, if not the process itself, that we must bring into our classrooms as we begin to introduce future citizens to their literary heritage.

### Notes

[1] Proem, Book Five, *The Harmonies of the World* (1619).
[2] From the unpublished work. *Johannes Climacus or De Omnibus Dubitandum Est*, quoted in Johannes Hohlenberg, *Sören Kierkegaard* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1954), pp. 31–32.

# 2

## Imagination and the Literature Curriculum

### James E. Miller, Jr.

*M*any of us have assumed for so long that literature has a rightful place at the center of the educational process, from beginning to end, that we no longer are easily able to marshal the arguments to defend or support its central position. It comes as a shock to us when we hear that literature—*as literature*—is no longer an important component of the elementary curriculum. And we are told, indeed, that perhaps it never was. But there is in progress a revolution in the English curriculum, and as the revolution proceeds apace, questioning and probing eyes are turned more and more frequently to the earlier years of the education experience. All of the experts whose fields touch on language—psychologists, linguists, grammarians, rhetoricians, critics—tend to agree that the beginning years are the crucial years. If these experts are right, it is surely time to reexamine the elementary English curriculum. The linguists have already begun to reassess reading programs, and the rhetoricians have begun to raise questions about composition. The moment has arrived for those of us committed to literature to come forth with whatever claims we are able to muster for the relevance to the elementary years of a literary initiation.

### Two Quotations That Point Direction

Since I teach literature, I shall begin with two literary quotations which will serve to point out both the bias and the direction of my remarks. The first, the opening lines of Wordsworth's famous "Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," presents a view of the child which we all recognize, from our own experience, as poignantly true:

> There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
> The earth, and every common sight,
>     To me did seem
> Apparelled in celestial light,

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> The glory and the freshness of a dream.
> It is not now as it hath been of yore;—
>     Turn whereso'er I may,
>       By night or day,
> The things which I have seen I now can see no more.
>
>      The Rainbow comes and goes,
>      And lovely is the Rose,
>      The moon doth with delight
>   Look round her when the heavens are bare,
>    Waters on a starry night
>    Are beautiful and fair;
>   The sunshine is a glorious birth;
>   But yet I know, whe'er I go,
> That there hath past away a glory from the earth.

As you will remember, the poet goes on to lament the losses that growth to adulthood inevitably entails—the "clouds of glory" of childhood gradually thin until they fade "into the light of common day." Wordsworth's poetic concept, that childhood holds a special and meaningful magic which slowly dissipates, contains a truth, I believe, a truth that has relevance to the place of literature in the elementary curriculum.

The other quotation is ancient, but I copy it from a contemporary source, J. W. Salinger's story, "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters." In the early pages of his story, Salinger quotes a Taoist tale which Seymour Glass used to read to his sister Franny. It runs as follows:

> Duke Mu of Chin said to Po Lo: "You are now advanced in years. Is there any member of your family whom I could employ to look for horses in your stead?" Po Lo replied: "A good horse can be picked out by its general build and appearance. But the superlative horse—one that raises no dust and leaves no tracks—is something evanescent and fleeting, elusive as thin air. The talent. f my sons lie on a lower plane altogether; they can tell a good horse when they see one, but they cannot tell a superlative horse. I have a friend, however, one Chiu-fang Kao, a hawker of fuel and vegetables, who in things appertaining to horses is nowise my inferior. Pray see him."
>
> Duke Mu did so, and subsequently dispatched him on the quest for a steed. Three months later, he returned with the news that he had found one. "It is now in Shack'iu," he added. "What kind of a horse is it?" asked the Duke. "Oh, it is a dun-colored mare," was the reply. However, someone being sent to fetch it, the animal turned out to be a coal-black stallion! Much displeased, the Duke sent for Po Lo. "That friend of yours," he said, "whom I commissioned to look for a horse, has made a fine mess of it. Why he cannot even distinguish a beast's color or sex! What on earth can he know about horses?" Po Lo heaved a sigh of satisfaction. "Has he really got as far as that?" he cried. "Ah, then he is worth ten thousand of

me put together. There is no comparison between us. What Kao keeps in view is the spiritual mechanism. In making sure of the essential, he forgets the homely details; intent on the inward qualities, he loses sight of the external. He sees what he wants to see, and not what he does not want to see. He looks at the things he ought to look at, and neglects those that need not be looked at. So clever a judge of horses is Kao, that he has it in him to judge something better than horses."[1]

When the horse arrived, it turned out indeed to be a superlative animal. An essential distinction is made in the tale between the judge of horses who sees only the externals and the judge who penetrates past the externals to the "spiritual mechanism" of the horse, a distinction that has, I believe, a relevance to literary education, and connects in some significant way with the Wordsworthian view of the child "trailing clouds of glory." Both Wordsworth's poem and the Taoist tale present views of certain aspects of reality that, if true as I take them to be, should have important consequences for the elementary literature curriculum.

### Encounter with a Student

Now I would like to turn for a moment to an incident out of my personal experience that has some bearing, however remote, on my topic. On a visit to Boston for an NCTE convention, I happened to leave my glasses at a restaurant fairly distant from the hotel where I was staying. To retrieve them, I had to take a taxi out to the restaurant and ask the driver to wait for my almost immediate return. Somewhat at odds with myself for my carelessness and annoyed at the necessity for paying a round-trip cab fare, I became a bit more voluble than usual and struck up a conversation with the taxi driver. He turned out to be not just a uniform with a number, but a human being with a tale. He hailed from Arizona, where he had been a good math and science student in high school, he had served a stint in the army, and he was now a student at MIT, earning his way in part by driving a taxi. I thought I recognized the pattern and began to ask him about his humanities and English courses. He had, he said, been an *A* student in English in high school, and he "sort of" liked some of the Shakespeare he was reading for his humanities course. But the major question confronting him was whether he would continue school or go into the real estate business with his brother, who was making a killing. Behind this large question, however, lay an even bigger one: what was *it* all about, what was *it* all for, what did *it* all mean. The big *It* here, of course, was life. How my taxi driver and I got down so quickly to the essentials of existence, I simply cannot

recall. But before the ride was over, the young man was hesitantly and tentatively outlining for me his philosophy of life, which began with the remarkable and startling assumption, based obviously on wide experience and deep thought—"everything is phooey." *"Everything is phooey."* This may not strike you as a very substantial basis on which to build a view of life, but I suspect that this young man was being more honest with himself and with a passing stranger than most people are capable of being.

Shortly before leaving me at my hotel the young man made a confession: He was a poet! He had written poetry—in secret—ever since high school. He has never tried to publish and probably never would try, but he continued to write. As I was fumbling my way out of the taxi, the young man said, "I probably would never have said any of these things to you if I thought I was ever going to see you again." I was struck with the truth and oddity of this remark: our very strangeness to each other had served to inspire the intimate revelations: as a stranger I could be trusted with the taxi driver's innermost secrets. Cognizant of my role as a kind of transient confessor figure, I searched for the right parting remark. Somewhat feebly I said: "Keep up the writing, it's good for the soul." But I felt the need to add something. I stumbled on: "As for your view of life and its phooeyness—now that you have stripped existence to its essentials, you ought with a little imagination to begin building up again an honest view that makes life tolerable and sometimes, even, a little fun." I grinned, he grinned, and he drove away into the Boston night.

This is a tale that has no sequel, no conclusion. But it contains some important aspects of human behavior which I consider significant for teachers. There is that strange view of life, at once startling and at once familiar, formed out of the total experience of the individual, compounded of youthful frustration, despair, wonder. And there is all that poetry, probably an intense groping toward or grappling with the big, shapeless ideas hurtling about in the innermost being. I have met many such people as this young taxi driver during my life, people who were driven by some inner compulsion to create, to write poetry. For example, when John F. Kennedy was assassinated, I was astonished at the number of my students and friends who turned in their anguish to the writing of poetry. So frequent has my encounter with such people been, so often have I been furtively asked to read poems by unpublished, unsung poets, that I am willing to venture a generalization about human nature—if you scratch deeply enough, you'll uncover a poet.

### Content and Sequence in Literary Study:  Some Proposals

Now with this somewhat miscellaneous sequence of items dangling before you—Wordsworth's view of the child, the Taoist view of reality, and my view of human nature—I want to turn to some rather abstract questions about the place of literature in the elementary curriculum. The two questions are both "why" and "how":  why literature should be in the elementary curriculum, and the rationale for a sequence in the literature program.

Although I have not made a detailed study of the way literature is now currently taught, I would venture to guess that most frequently there is no order, or little order, or at best a *utilitarian* order in the literature sequence. That is, the literature is made subordinate to some useful purpose—the teaching of reading skills, the teaching of the nature of society, of history, of other lands and people, or the inculcation of proper behavior or morality. I assume, from my small knowledge of curriculum reform now going on, that rarely is literature taught as literature, for its own sake and for its own inherent values.

NCTE's volume, *Source Book on English Institutes for Elementary Teachers* (1965), contains an entire section devoted to the teaching of literature at the elementary level. In one of the book's most important articles, Charlotte S. Huck states, "Children need to be guided in their identification and analysis of the basic elements of literature." And she organizes her essay in such a way as to suggest the structure of the literature curriculum along lines of the elements of literature:  characterization, diction, tone, theme, point of view, style, genre, structure.[2] In another important article in this NCTE volume, Paul A. Olson and Ned S. Hedges describe the nature of the elementary literature curriculum as it has been worked out at the University of Nebraska Curriculum Center. In this curriculum, genre or types rather than literary elements dictate sequence. The kinds of works and their order in the sequence are:  parable, fable, the picaresque, myth, comedy and "boy-meets-girl" romance, children's poetry and adult poetry, and, finally, allegorical romance.[3] It would be an injustice to both Miss Huck and to Messrs. Olson and Hedges to suggest that they propose or adhere to a rigid and fixed sequence in the literature curriculum. In both instances, I believe, their aim would be to build a sequence on a spiral curriculum as suggested by Jerome S. Bruner, moving from the simple to the more complex and difficult.

Still a third proposal for the organization of the elementary literature curriculum appears in a series of writings by the eminent Canadian

literary critic, Northrop Frye. Perhaps the most conveniently condensed and immediately relevant of these writings is his essay "Elementary Teaching and Elemental Scholarship" in the May 1964 issue of *PMLA*. In this essay, as elsewhere in his works, Frye makes a number of suggestions that have a bearing on the structuring of the elementary literature curriculum. He says: "The stories of Biblical and classical mythology should clearly have a central place in all elementary teaching of literature, so that the student is thoroughly familiar with them, as stories, before he embarks on the more systematic study of mythology that I have assumed would begin with high school." But Frye's main suggestion for curriculum sequence springs from his archetypal view of literature; he says: "I think of stories as divisible into four mythoi or generic plots, the romantic, the comic, the tragic, and the ironic. . . . It seems to me that comic and romantic stories are the ones to stress in elementary school, and that tragic and ironic ones, which are most easily understood as divergences, reversals, or parodies of the other two, should be reserved for later study." It should be pointed out parenthetically that Frye's article is filled with a multitude of seminal ideas, darting off in many different directions, and deserves wide circulation and careful study.[4] And it should be observed further parenthetically that the Nebraska literature curriculum as described by Olson and Hedges reflects some of Frye's thinking and attitude.

### Need to Make a Case for Literature

In spite of the value and ingenuity of the variety of suggestions for the elementary literature curriculum that I have summarized here, I have the uncomfortable feeling that in all of them the case for literature remains not only unclear but even weakened. By the "case for literature" I mean the reason for its being included in the elementary curriculum at all. Can those of us devoting our lives to the teaching of literature really believe that it is somehow vital for children, or even adults, to have an analytical understanding of character in a short story or of tone in a poem? Or can we believe that the study of the formal elements of the parable or fable is somehow central to human experience? Or that the understanding of such genres as comedy and romance will result in the kind of expanded awareness vital to educational growth? I think most people who are committed to literature as a way of life would find serious deficiencies in the assumptions that seem to lie behind these curricula sequences. I do not want to suggest that the individuals who designed these curricula are less seriously dedicated to literature than others—

far from it; they are some of the most deeply committed people I know. What I do want to suggest is that, to date, the designs of literary curricula for the elementary grades fail to reflect the real reason that literature is taught at all, on any level.

By thus working my way through the "how" part of my question, I arrive at the "why" of literature in education. It is my thesis that once we understand and agree on the need for literature in the elementary or any other curriculum, we shall arrive at a basis for developing a sequence of literary study that reflects that need and its centrality to the educational process. It is at this point, I hope, that my long prologue involving Wordsworth, Taoism, and personal experience with a taxi driver will begin to become more clearly relevant. And it is at this point that the title of my paper, "Imagination and the Literature Curriculum," must be reintroduced. The key term is "imagination." It is my conviction that the basis for literary study in the schools is the education of the imagination. It is my further conviction that this aim of educating the imagination is so vital to the total educational process as to justify the placement of literature at the heart of any defensible curriculum.

Behind the idea of "education of the imagination" is the assumption that the imagination is a universal faculty. Every individual has an imagination. It is necessary to emphasize this point because for so long the literary commentators have appropriated the term for the literary genius or the poet—for example, Coleridge in his special definition of imagination as a faculty distinguished from and higher than the fancy. Every child has an imagination; the problem for the educator is to discover not only the means to keep it from diminishing but also the means to nourish and develop it.

Not only must I insist that the imagination exists as a birthright of every individual, but I must also insist that it has a separate but equal status with the intellect. Indeed, it is possible that only integration of both faculties develops each to the full. I wonder how frequently those of us concerned with education have paused to reflect that what we are really trying to do is, regardless of our subject matter, to teach our students how to think. This rather commonplace observation indicates the radical bias in our everyday reflection on the aims of education: we place the intellect or reason in the center of our concern. I would like to modify this commonplace by extending it: our aim should be to teach our students how to think *and* how to imagine. Reason and imagination make up the whole man. One without the other results in a dehumanization that is crippling and degrading.

Let me explain what I mean by mentioning two phenomena of our time, idiot savants and cybernetics. Recently there appeared in the press a description of twin idiot savants—wise idiots—who had phenomenal memories for remembering a variety of miscellaneous statistical or sequential information, the kind of information we sometimes demand of our students.[5] But though able to perform beyond normal human capability in certain areas of mentality, the idiot savants could not respond except childishly to questions in other, seemingly simpler, intellectual areas. Although idiot savants are not particular to our time, the science of cybernetics is very much a part of our age—the science which, according to one definition, deals with "the comparative study of complex electronic calculating machines and the human nervous system in an attempt to explain the nature of the brain."[6] Computers have been built which can perform mental feats or feats of memory that are beyond the capability of the human mind. But no machine that I know of has yet performed even at the most primitive level genuine feats of the imagination. We have long held that man's mind is what distinguishes him from the other animals; we might one day have to say that it is man's imagination that distinguishes him from the machines.

### Imagination as the Core of Being

Imagination is universal; imagination is equal with intellect. To these two propositions I would add that imagination is not a frill, not a decorative element in life, not a pleasant but inessential fellow-faculty of the intellect; it is, indeed, at the very core of being, it defines personality, and through it we are able to apprehend reality and to create order out of the chaos of experience. On the lowest level it gives us a daydream; on the highest it bestows meaning on our lives. In short, imagination is an essential faculty of existence. As Wallace Stevens has said, imagination is "an aspect of the conflict between man and organized society. It is part of our security. It enables us to live our own lives. We have it because we do not have enough without it. . . . The imagination is the power that enables us to perceive the normal in the abnormal, the opposite of chaos in chaos."[7]

We have heard much about the extensive language sophistication and the elaborate and complex grammatical system which a six-year-old brings unconsciously within himself on his first day at school. How sophisticated and how complex is his imaginative faculty? Nobody really knows, I suspect. And I am willing to guess that, just as the child's language ability was long underrated, the child's imaginative experience

and capacity have been largely unnoticed and ignored. The early years, before school age, must be the years of undisciplined freedom and uninhibited growth of the imagination. These are the years of play and revery, the years of living on the thin edge that separates the real and the imaginative world. The young child readily creates imaginative toys and playmates, social structures and civilizations, histories and worlds. When he enters school, he must bring with him an imagination as developed and sophisticated as his language system. It should be the aim of education to capitalize on this invaluable childhood asset, to discover, cultivate, and develop the imagination the child brings with him to school. I wonder whether the educational process does not sometimes do precisely the opposite; that is, ignore, discourage, or annihilate the child's imagination. Perhaps this was what Henry Adams had in mind when he said, "Nothing in education is so astonishing as the amount of ignorance it accumulates in the form of inert facts."[8]

Perhaps now some of the ideas I tried to plant at the beginning of my paper are ready for further cultivation. The Wordsworthian portrait of childhood is, I believe, a personalized poetic statement of the imaginative condition of childhood I have been trying to describe. I would not argue, of course, that every child has the potentiality of becoming a Wordsworth. But I would contend that the experience of childhood Wordsworth describes is, to some degree, a universal experience: every child goes through a period of dynamic imaginative engagement with the world and its mysteries. It is the challenge of education to exploit this rich experience to assure that the imaginative losses, as the child grows older, are as few as possible, and that the imaginative gains bring some kind of compensation and balance. As for the Taoist tale of the judges of horses: clearly, the judge who relies on the horse's exterior appearance, his color and sex, is the man of intellect; while the judge who penetrates to the "spiritual mechanism" of the horse is the man of imagination, who can in fact discover a "superlative animal." Indeed, one might imagine a computer making the kind of judgment that is compounded merely of the external features of the horse, especially those features that are expressible in statistical terms; no computer, however, could ever be built to take the measure of a horse's "spiritual mechanism." The Boston taxi driver, who is a combination of a nihilistic philosopher and a secret poet and whose imaginative life has gone underground, is a typical product of our schools. I see a special irony in the facts of his situation, that is, his attendance at MIT, the home of cybernetics and intelligent machines. But in secret and on his own he

seems to be attempting to do what our schools should have taught him to do as a natural part of his growth to maturity. Through the creativity of his poetry, he is trying to discover and body forth the order that his deepest intuitions—or imagination—tell him lies buried deep beneath the intellectually thin philosophy which he professes to believe, the philosophy of phooey.

### Points of View on Education of Imagination

I have, in a sense, been talking about the imagination as though I alone had discovered it. As a matter of fact, many educational theorists have pointed to the imagination as a faculty vital to the process of education. Margaret McMillan, in *Education Through the Imagination*, pointed out that the popular concept of the imagination as the prerogative of "poets, painters, romancers, and children" and as "a kind of weakness in practical men" is all wrong: "It is [she says] the creative power of the mind which lights up all work, which gives life and meaning to it at every stage, and gave it birth in the beginning; and this is true of the dustman's job as well as of the artist's or the statesman's." She began some sixty years ago with the assumption that I am echoing today: "If Imagination plays such a very great part in every sphere of life, it cannot be very wise to ignore it in the elementary school."[9] In a book published in 1920, Edwin A. Kirkpatrick's *Imagination and Its Place in Education*—a book whose text does not live up to its title—the first paragraph of the "Introduction" seems as applicable today as when first written:

> Imagination has been the Cinderella of the intellectual faculties, so far as the attention and interest of those who are charged with the care and culture of the young are concerned. Educational literature has been filled with discussions of the nature, value, and training of perception, memory, and reason; but imagination has always been kept in the background,— so much so, in fact, that most parents and teachers have only very hazy notions respecting the role which this intellectual process plays in human life and the prominence which it should be accorded in education. Nine out of ten persons speak of imagination as though it were not a vital factor in mental operations,—as though it could be ignored or eliminated without loss to the efficiency, stability, or balance of the human mind.[10]

In still another book of some years ago, Ruth Griffiths' *A Study of Imagination in Early Childhood* (1935), the author, in reporting some of her experiments in capitalizing on the imaginative faculty of the child, began with the familiar claim of the importance of the imagination along with the complaint of its neglect in education:

The imaginative tendencies of early childhood have long been recognized as characteristic of these early years, which have indeed been called "the age of imagination." The long periods of day-dreaming, the tendency to invent "imaginary companions," to construct a world of fairyland into which temporarily to retreat from the world of sense, to dramatize in play remembered scenes, to murmur aloud long conversations with toys and visualized, but non-present, objects or persons, all these tendencies have been observed but, being usually misunderstood, have been largely disparaged and dismissed as "play" in contradistinction to the more valuable "work" of school that comes later. At best these tendencies have been tolerated as harmless amusements, at worst they have been regarded as dangerous, unhealthy, or a waste of time.[11]

From this statement let us take a giant stride into our own time, some thirty years later, and take a brief look at an NCTE publication entitled *Language and the Higher Thought Processes* (1965), and at one particular article by the late David H. Russell, "Research on the Processes of Thinking with Some Application to Reading." In this article David Russell distinguishes six kinds of thinking processes: perceptual thinking, associative thinking, concept formation, problem solving, critical thinking, and, finally, creative thinking. In my view, the last three of these processes involve, to some degree or other, facets of the imagination, but the last—creative thinking—probably is simply the modern psychologist's term for the old, old faculty we have been discussing. And moreover, Russell's discussion of this thought process has a familiar ring to it:

> The whole area of creative thinking . . . bristles with problems. Is there such a thing as teaching creativeness? Does creativity in play, rhythms, and language occur before creative thinking about social or scientific problems, and are they different things? What can teachers do to achieve some sort of balance between conformity and spontaneity in the classroom? How can we get more "discovery" into a reading lesson? What are the places of production *versus* appreciation in reading and in other curricular areas?[12]

Although the problems of exploiting the imagination in the educational process at the elementary level continue to defy easy solution, still the possibilities tease the psychologist and educator with visions of rich and meaningfully *human* rewards.

Before turning to the specific role of literature in the development of creative thinking or imagination, I must mention three additional and recent books which I have come upon in my brief researches on this subject. Harold Rugg, in a book entitled simply *Imagination* (1963), has provided one of the most exciting and perceptive studies I have seen in a profound exploration of one of the deepest mysteries of the mind:

> What is the nature of the act of thought, when, in one brilliant moment,

there is a sudden veering of attention, a consequent grasp of new dimensions, and a new idea is born? Some autonomous forming process sweeps like a magnet across the chaotic elements of the threshold state, picking up the significant segments and, in a welding flash, precipitates the meaningful response. What is this magical force that forms the bits and pieces of the stuff of the mind?[13]

In the process of discovering some of the answers to this infinitely complex question, Rugg comes to the conclusion that the entire educational establishment needs reexamination. He says: "We have had millions of hours devoted to training in solving problems by reasoning, but almost none devoted to cultivation of the imagination." The remedy must be radical: "A reexamination of behavior theory is called for. . . . We are now forced to restudy the foundations of a new theory of curriculum, teaching and administration. . . . This will require nothing less than a revolution in the education of teachers."[14]

Working along different, more specifically literary lines, Stephen Spender, in *The Imagination in the Modern World* (1962), discovers a no less important contemporary role for the imagination: "The imagination has been restored in modern literature to its position of Verb. The reinstating of imagination as primary, central, the verb, was perhaps the attitude responsible for the greatest modern achievements [in literature]."[15] Northrop Frye, in *The Educated Imagination* (1964), has provided one of the most readable and persuasive pleas I have seen for the use of literature in the education of the imaginative faculty. He says, bluntly:

Literature speaks the language of the imagination, and the study of literature is supposed to train and improve the imagination. But we use our imagination all the time; it comes into all our conversation and practical life; it even produces dreams when we are asleep. Consequently, we have only the choice between a badly trained imagination and a well-trained one, whether we ever read a poem or not.[16]

The value of this frank statement is that it brings us back forcefully to the truth that the imagination is not a faculty belonging exclusively to the world's prophets and poets, but indeed is the gift of every man— and of every child. The education of the imagination, then, is not the education for genius, but the education for life itself.

## Bases of a Program to Develop Imagination

What, then, can be done to launch a war on the prevalent poverty of the imagination? This question brings me back to my discussion of the organization of the elementary literature curriculum. If we may assume

that the imagination plays a vital role in the life of every individual, and that the imagination is a faculty which may be identified and developed in the educational process as the individual passes from childhood to maturity, and, finally, that literature has *the* significant part to play in the maturing process of the imagination—then it would seem to me that literature curriculum design should be based not on the body of literature or the individual work of literature (at least not exclusively), but rather on the nature or structure of the imagination itself (at least in large part). And if such a curriculum is to be designed, the dual nature of the imagination should be stressed from the outset. The imagination is a faculty that both takes and gives, apprehends and creates, discovers and reveals. This dual nature of the imagination should instruct us, therefore, that it is important to construct a dual curriculum, one which energizes and encourages both the inflow and the outflow of the imagination. Pupils should not only read stories and dramas and poems, but they should tell stories, act out dramas, and compose poems. They should both experience and create fairy tales and myths. They should study, but they should also generate their own legends and tall tales, tragedies and comedies. In short, the literary experience in the elementary curriculum should be conceived of in the broadest sense as encompassing both creative reading and creative production, both literature and composition. And in judgment of the students' work, stultifying standards of correctness (frequently so sterile in effect) should be definitely subordinated to more fruitful and productive standards of imaginative richness.

This concept of the imagination as a dual faculty that both experiences and generates should also prove instructive in designing the literary encounter. The imagination is not merely a passive faculty that quietly rests and absorbs in the encounter. It is, rather, a vital organism that, when fully alive and responding, is actively engaged in the encounter and simultaneously transfigured (or educated) by it. Basic literary study should not, then, be conceived merely as the development of analytical talent or the acquisition of literary knowledge. It should place emphasis rather on *experiencing* the work of literature, and it should be in constant search for the ways and means of assuring the deepest *engagement* and *involvement*. Walt Whitman once wrote: "Books are to be call'd for, and supplied, on the assumption that the process of reading is not a half-sleep, but, in the highest sense, an exercise, a gymnast's struggle; that the reader is to do something for himself, must be on the alert, must himself or herself construct indeed the poem, argument, his-

tory, metaphysical essay—the text furnishing the hints, the clue, the start or frame-work."[17] This is creative reading indeed, and when it occurs, the literary experience may be regarded as fulfilling its educational purpose, resulting in the exercise, growth, and development of the imagination.

With these two concepts firmly in mind—that the imagination should be frequently exercised both in its acquisitive and its contributive attributes and that the literary encounter should always be an active experience of involvement and engagement—it will perhaps prove useful to sketch a tentative sequence for the elementary literature curriculum. The following outline lists ten items or concepts of the imagination somewhat in the order of complexity, but it is by no means meant to be exhaustive or to impose a rigid order on the curriculum. Experienced elementary teachers will know much better than I what might prove appropriate to introduce at various grade levels. It is my belief, however, that the Jerome Bruner suggestion of a spiral curriculum would be applicable. Each of the items I have listed may be explored repeatedly, from the simplest to the most complex levels, from the simplest to the most complex works of literature. It would, in any event, be a major blunder to teach the concepts I have listed as abstractions. I assume that they would and should be taught inductively, with works of good literature within the students' capabilities, and with composition (or imaginatively creative) assignments closely related to readings.

### Basic Concepts of Imagination

I. THE WORLD OF THE IMAGINATION. In the lowest grades, the child should be drawn into the ordered world of the literary artist's imagination by introducing him to a large variety of forms and types of literature—stories, poems, plays, myths, fables, and fairy tales—in the hope of involving him deeply by engaging his interests and emotions. This will not, of course, be the child's first encounter with an imaginative world. He will bring with him his rich experience in fantasies, reveries, dreams, and play, and also, of course, his somewhat less clearly useful—but still perhaps valuable—encounter with movies, television, the comics, and other similar standardized or simplistic imaginative worlds. He may also have at his command rich linguistic resources, especially in his intuitive feeling for language as a game of both sense and nonsense. At this initial level of the literary encounter two aims may predominate. One should be to provide an experience that will prove, at some point, in some

aspect, so profound that the student will become permanently addicted to literature as a necessity of life, in the hope that the student's genuine encounters will multiply not only in the classroom but more frequently without—and, indeed, far beyond the years of formal education. The other aim should be to expand the experience of the child through imaginative extension. By means of the imagination the child may travel through time to witness other periods of history, or he may travel through space to experience the life in a family in Europe, Africa, South America, or Asia; or he may penetrate the cultural barrier of his own country or state or community and come to know people of another race, another economic level, another set of mores. This widening of experience is one of literature's most valuable and enduring contributions to the imagination (and the identity of the individual), but it is especially valuable for children eager to experience the world that lies always beyond their own horizons.

II. IMAGE IN THE IMAGINATION. At some point in his continuing encounter with literature, the child should be helped to discover the basically physical and patterned nature of the world which literature creates. Of course the child will already know, but he will not know that he knows. Much of the best teaching of literature consists of assisting students to discover what they have already felt or apprehended at levels deeper than the conscious. Walt Whitman once wrote:

> I know I am solid and sound,
> To me the converging objects of the universe perpetually flow,
> All are written to me, and I must get what the writing means.[18]

John Keats exclaimed to a friend, "O for a life of Sensations rather than of thought."[19] These two quotations contain much of the spirit of or feeling for things—objects—that literature may cultivate in the imaginations of young students. By firing his imagination, the vividly highlighted and carefully ordered physical world of literature may enable the student to see—really see—the world around him for the first time, or to see familiar objects with fresh sight and insight. In short, through imaginative recognition of the ordered physical world of literature, the student may begin to detect—or create—an order in the actual world around him: the chaos of experience gives way to the ordered patterns of reality.

III. DUALITY OF THE IMAGINATION. It is, apparently, the basic nature of the imagination to see one thing in terms of another. The dual or metaphoric nature of the imagination, this duality of vision, underlies an entire series of basic literary concepts ranging from the simple to the complex: metaphor and simile, symbolism, allegory. The student should

be gradually—or spirally—introduced to this complexity, never through mere definition, but through actual experience of the thing as it is:

> Like to the falling of a star,
> Or as the flights of eagles are,
> Or like the fresh spring's gaudy hue,
> Or silver drops of morning dew,
> Or like a wind that chafes the flood,
> Or bubbles which on water stood:
> Even such is man, whose borrowed light
> Is straight called in, and paid to night:
> > The wind blows out, the bubble dies,
> > The spring entombed in autumn lies;
> > The dew dries up, the star is shot,
> > The flight is past, and man forgot.[20]

Although I shall not here attempt comprehensive definitions of metaphor, simile, symbol, and allegory, I would warn against such oversimplified definitions as those frequently found in the school books (a metaphor is an implied comparison, a simile uses "like"). Deep within this impulse to duality of vision lies the essence of imaginative creativity: two familiar things are fused in such a way as to create something new and unique. Philip Wheelwright insists on the complexity of this duality of vision ranging through metaphor, symbolism, and allegory, when he remarks that "What really matters in a metaphor is the psychic depth at which the things of the world, whether actual or fancied, are transmuted by the cool heat of the imagination."[21]

IV. PERSPECTIVES OF THE IMAGINATION. It is fundamental to the imagination that, in the midst of multiplicity, it be selective, and that out of the countless angles of vision on the universe, it choose one or a patterned series for itself alone in any particular work of art. In their reading, students must eventually become aware that literature does not consist of strings of events that exist "out there," but as happenings or episodes or moments selected and presented from a particular perspective or point of view; remove the perspective, and the literature is likely to disappear. Point of view in narrative, voice in lyric poetry, representation of events in drama—these must not be resolved into mere technical questions, but must be seen as lying at the heart of the deepest meaning of works of literature. And in discovering perspectives in literature, students should also discover the multitudinous possibilities of perspective open to their imagination as it reaches out to the reality around them.

V. INDIVIDUALITY OF THE IMAGINATION. Like fingerprints, imaginations are identifiable and unique. Although many writers have told the story

of St. Joan or of Don Juan, their works have actually differed radically. It is important that at some point students encounter enough of the work of a single writer to observe the qualities that make any single poem cr story that writer's, and none other's. Edgar Allan Poe or Emily Dickinson are examples of writers that might be used at some appropriate level. There are many qualities, such as style and tone, that give identity to the body of a writer's work. Students will probably see the identity before they observe the specific qualities. Teachers might find parodies of an author not only a relief from seriousness but also useful in highlighting the distinctive elements of a writer. And perhaps in learning to discover the identity of a writer, the student will begin to make explorations of his own identity.

VI. REALITY AND THE IMAGINATION. Literature might be defined as the lie which is truth. Many readers have observed that they can learn more about certain aspects of nineteenth century history from Dickens' novels than they can from straight histories. Even the world of the fairy tale or the fantasy contains a kind of self-generating reality with its own laws of probability and cause and effect. In short, imagination has its own ways of apprehending and recreating reality—ways which differ fundamentally from the direct ways of the intellect or reason. In exploring these differences, students will begin to develop some understanding of the complexity of the real reality, the world, and human behavior. Keats once said: "I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination. . . . The Imagination may be compared to Adam's dream—he awoke and found it truth."[22] In a similar vein Joseph Conrad wrote: "Only in men's imagination does every truth find an effective and undeniable existence. Imagination, not invention, is the supreme master of art as of life."[23]

VII. FEELINGS AND THE IMAGINATION. From the ancient time of the development of comedy and tragedy, literature has evoked emotions. And in deep and subterranean ways, emotions are involved with the felt-truth that an imaginative participant carries away from the experience of any work of literature. There is, then, an imagination of the emotions. Surely a major part of the education of the imagination is in fact an education of the emotions as they flow out in response to imaginative works. Whatever the intricate relationship of emotions in life and emotions in literature, surely no one would dispute that education of the latter would have some bearing or influence on the former. The rich emotional experiences deriving from the fullest and deepest participation in profoundly moving works of literature are self-justifying in themselves.

But there are found to be consequences, too, as the emotionally enriched and disciplined imagination turns from the ordered experience of literature to the raw experience of life itself.

VIII. AWARENESS AND THE IMAGINATION. As there is an imagination of the emotions, so there is also a "moral imagination." Just as there is always a physical angle or point of view which determines perspective in a narrative, so there is always a moral angle or point of view, however subtle it might appear. Surely one of the most profound effects of literature is to broaden moral horizons. The consequences of the moral education of the imagination should be obvious. But a note of warning must be sounded against the temptation in teachers to reduce complex works of literature to moral homilies. Nothing destroys the work for the student more quickly. World views, values, moral imaginations differ subtly from writer to writer. As the student goes from one to the other, gradually his moral awareness will broaden and deepen—and take a shape distinctively its own.

IX. STRUCTURES OF THE IMAGINATION. There is, apparently, an instinctive passion in the imagination for order and unity: it is in the nature of the imagination to create whole structures. The experience of the work is a self-contained and complete experience. As students become more and more sophisticated in their response to literature, attention should focus on literary works as structures made up of parts intricately combined to form wholes. At some point in literary study, probably at a fairly advanced level, analysis of individual works should be introduced. Attention may be turned in narrative to the sequence of events that make up a plot, or the elements of description or series of actions that define character, or the use of time and place to suggest meaning; or in poetry, to the images and metaphors and units of thought, with their extensions, repetitions, or reversals. But in the exploration of structural interrelationship of parts, care should be taken that analyzing the work is not confused with experiencing the work. The one should never be substituted for the other, but it is hoped that analysis might lead to a deeper experience.

X. FORMS OF THE IMAGINATION. It is characteristic of the imagination that it express itself in a variety of forms—fairy tales, myths, parables, legends, anecdotes, tall tales, short stories, sonnets, odes, elegies, epigrams, ballads, limericks, lyric poems, narrative poems, allegories, novels, social comedies, theatre of the absurd, and so on and on. At some point, again probably at a fairly advanced level, the students should be introduced to the great variety of forms, not with the aim of forcing upon them

hard and fast definitions of the forms, but rather with the aim of exploring such things as the multitude of uses found in any one form, or limitations of one form as contrasted with another, or the concepts of artificial (outer) and organic (inner) form. As in all the other areas of the imagination outlined above, the students' own imaginations should be engaged not only in absorbing but also in producing: they should be challenged to create a myth or compose a sonnet or write a short story.

## In Conclusion

In conclusion, I wish to repeat that I would not claim that the ten items in this proposed sequence for the elementary literature curriculum are in an inevitable order, or that they are exhaustive. But I do believe we shift attention to the central purpose of literature in education when we shift the focus in curriculum design to the faculty of the imagination and its development both as participant and as creator in the experience with literature. And if we acknowledge, as I think we must, that the imagination has a vital role to play in our lives, then I think we must also acknowledge that literature is no frill or ornament or decoration for education, but rather goes to the very heart of its central purposes and aims.

## Notes

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[15] Stephen Spender, *The Imagination in the Modern World* (Washington, D. C.: Library of Congress, 1962), pp. 11–12.

[16] Northrop Frye, *The Educated Imagination* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964), pp. 134–135.

[17] Walt Whitman, *Democratic Vistas,* in *Complete Poetry and Selected Prose,* ed. J. E. Miller, Jr. (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1962).

[18] Whitman, "Song of Myself," *op. cit.*

[19] John Keats, Letter to Benjamin Bailey, Nov. 22, 1817.

[20] Henry King, Bishop of Chichester (1592–1669), "Sic Vita."

[21] Philip Wheelwright, *Metaphor and Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), p. 71.

[22] Keats, *op. cit.*

[23] Joseph Conrad, *A Personal Record,* Chapter 1.

# 3

## Criticism as a Discipline:
## From Understanding to Interpretation

### Roy Harvey Pearce

*I* have been invited to consider with you the nature of the analytical process in studying literature. I shall hope to say something which you will find of use, even though I shall address myself to general, as opposed to particular, issues in the relation between criticism and teaching.

For about ten years now I have been drawn into the dialogue whose end is the establishment of us all, whatever the age-level of our students, as part of a single community of teachers of literature. This is my first opportunity to speak to teachers of elementary students. And I am grateful—and also perhaps a little apprehensive.

First, we must get into focus what critics over the past two decades or so have learned about reading and analyzing literature. On this occasion the best way of doing so is to consider that the whole development of critical theory and method in this century is essentially a development in pedagogy. It is true that the founding fathers of modern criticism— Eliot, Pound, and others—were poets, and that their concerns in criticism derived from their sense of the need to create a new, or renewed, poetry. Yet that need derived in turn from their sense of the weakening, under the pressures of what we have come to call mass culture, of the esthetic sensibility and its products. So that "modern" poetry, whatever its substantive concerns, is inevitably a series of demanding exercises in training the sensibility, as is "modern" criticism. What followed from the work of Eliot, Pound, and their peers early in this century is a revolution in the teaching of literature, as well as in its creation.

This occasion does not call for a study in historical reconstruction. I shall not wear you down with detailing the complex, yet on the whole coherent, development of the New Criticism and its variants. There are

histories and anthologies aplenty which will do that for you. What I want to do is to look closely at the implications of this development in our own time—the implications for what we do day-to-day: teach literature. And I shall do so by pointing out one simple fact: that the central aim of modern critical theory and method is to establish the study of literature as a discipline.

## Study of Literature as a Discipline

Now, we have recently heard much about that word: discipline. On a number of educational fronts, the concept of the disciplines has been rediscovered, or—if you like—reinvented. Here, of course, I think particularly of the work in science education associated with such distinguished men as Joseph Schwab and Jerome Bruner. And there are many others. Our rediscovery, or reinvention, of this concept has been of major importance. For it has been our means of recognizing that for each "subject-area" there is a characteristic mode of inquiry—the discipline—which has its own characteristic structure. That structure derives from the relationship obtaining among the knower, the known, and the world in which the process of knowing takes place. The study of literature, literary study as a mode of inquiry, then, is a process in which the subject (the student, or the reader, however you want to name him) seeks fully to comprehend the meaning of the object (the work of literature); and he would do so in a manner which would demand of him that he fully acknowledge the special and unique function of the object, in its sociocultural context, as he, in his sociocultural context, may subject himself to it. The problems raised by the differing yet overlapping sociocultural contexts are those which inevitably make the critic something of a cultural historian. What has the world out of which comes the story or poem to do with my world? he asks. And if he asks the question rightly, he will find himself rediscovering his world in the light of his discovery of the world, and also the times, of the story or poem.

All of which is to say somewhat abstractly that the aim of such study is to get out of a literary work that which, specifically as a literary work, it has to offer: to use it in the way its nature dictates that it must be used. All of which is also to point out that the object of study, the literary work, has, by virtue of being what it is, a special sort of claim on our attention. It has its own sort of integrity, which should not be violated. The aim of the critical theorist, thus what the critical theorist would teach the teacher of literature, is to comprehend that integrity

in all its "functionally" interrelated elements: so to understand and interpret the literary work and its role in our lives as to develop the appropriate mode of inquiring into and appreciating it. (You will note that I make so bold as to speak of "appreciation." And I mean to use this term precisely: Through the disciplined study of literature, one "appreciates"—that is, one's own value as a human being is enhanced. One appreciates.)

I am saying that what modern criticism and critical theory have to offer us as teachers is a definition of our professional discipline—the study of literature as a specific mode of inquiry, to be differentiated from other modes of inquiry precisely as the object of its attention, the literary work, is to be differentiated from the objects of attention of other disciplines, other modes of inquiry. The study of literature is not the study of history, is not the study of society, is not the study of ethics and morality, is not the study of a number of other objects—however intimately they may be related to literature, however much the critic and teacher may call on them when he comes to inquire into the relationship between the world of the story or poem and his own. This of course is a commonplace—but one, I fear, to which we all too easily pay merely pleasant lip service.

## Location of the Literary Work in Our Lives and World

To ascertain how the study of literature is a discipline, we must begin by locating, as it were, the literary work in our lives and the life of our world. Then we must ask how, so located, it has its own integrity. Then we must ask what claims that integrity puts on us, if we are to acknowledge it as indeed integrity. Those claims, if we can but understand them, will direct us toward understanding the study of literature as a discipline.

First: to locate the literary work in our lives and the life of our world. Let me quote John Crowe Ransom in one of his later essays:

> The poet's faith, I should say, is that this is "the best of all possible worlds"; inasmuch as it is not possible for imagination to acquaint us with any other world. It is a horrid as well as a beautiful world, but without the horror we should never focus the beauty; without death there would be no relish for life; without danger, no courage; without savagery, no gentleness; and without the background of our frequent ignominy, no human dignity and pride. . . . To the theologian the poet might want to say, one world at a time.[1]

The poet—I use "poet" as a shorthand term for the maker of literature— then takes as his province this world and ourselves in it, with, inasmuch

as he can, *all* of this world and *all* of ourselves. Within whatever portion or aspect of the world he confines himself, he would take everything into account, and try, on our behalf, to comprehend it. Another way of getting at Mr. Ransom's point—a graver way—is that of certain theologians in our time, who say that the essential subject of literature is human finitude, human limits—but that within the bounds of that finitude, within those limits, everything there is to be comprehended. Such theologians, I should say (and I am thinking particularly of two eminent Catholic critics, Father William Lynch and Father Walter Ong), are not the sort whom Mr. Ransom would warn off. On specifically theological grounds—involved in the notion of Christology, of God's becoming man and suffering as man—such theologians would persuade us that the stuff of literature is the human condition precisely as it can be understood as human. And yet another way that some of us have of making this point is to understand literature as, in its essential integrity, being limited by time as human beings experience it—that is, by the fact that man lives in and has a history. The net result of such varying approaches is a definition of humanism for our time, so that literature becomes a prime means of understanding our nature and experience in its finite totality.

The aim of education, it has been well said, is to discover that the given is in fact problematic, and then to seek to solve the problem. How then does the literary work serve us in such an enterprise? From the speculations I have just cited, it would follow that the creator of the literary work takes that segment of the world which he would imaginatively encompass as, in its very givenness, totally problematic. This is for him an assumption, a postulate. For him it follows that all things are possible. Even when he conceives of certain impossibilities (*e.g.*, that Hamlet because he must do this cannot do that. . .), he would make us aware of those possibilities which, even if in a practical sense they cannot be, nonetheless, still stand in the imagination as possibilities.

### The World of Huckleberry Finn: An Example

The design of *Huckleberry Finn* is such as to introduce us first to Tom Sawyer's world, a world dominated by the wishful fantasies of children and adolescents. We soon discover that Huck is at once of this world and apart from it. Accepting the terms in which its values are set, in his acts he nonetheless is able to give the lie to those values. And Mark Twain, as he creates Huck for us, makes us understand that Huck lives, and

even acts, according to values whose source is somehow different from the source of those by which Tom lives and acts. The difference becomes all the more apparent when we discover that the adults in Tom and Huck's world live according to values which are vicious precisely because they are childlike: It is appropriate for Tom to live in a world of wishful fantasy, but not so for the Duke and the Dauphin and the rest to do so. Huck, being totally himself, never knows how much he has "transcended" Tom Sawyer's world, not to say the world of the Duke and the Dauphin and the rest. Appropriately, according to the integrity of its design, the book must end (in the episodes centering on "rescuing" Jim) by putting us right back into Tom's world—which is the "real" world; and, in terms which are set by that world, Huck must still be trying, without quite knowing what he is doing, to escape from it—to "light out for the Territory ahead of the rest." Huck's career, as it is created for us, does not change his world. (Perhaps it changes our world, however.) He is in fact limited by the possibilities open to him, by the givenness of his world. Yet Mark Twain makes that givenness problematic by showing how Huck, in his beautifully instinctive way, can conceive of doing the impossible and can even seem to get away with it. It is the freedom of the writer of high imagination which allows Mark Twain at the end to leave the matter open. The question which remains with us is not: will Huck do the impossible? Or even: has he done the impossible? Rather it is: what have we learned of the human condition, in the richly coherent context of this situation, which shows how the limitations of the possible inevitably put upon us the burden of seeing them exactly as limitations? How has reading *Huckleberry Finn* changed our world by changing us? How have we "appreciated"? In short: How is it that every solution to problems entailed by the givenness of human condition raises further problems?

In much modern criticism, the word for "problematic" is "ambiguous." For the creator of literature, the very fact of human consciousness, of human self-consciousness, of human self-awareness, renders the life of man in his world ambiguous, puzzling, joyful in desperation, desperate even in joy. The special burden of the writer is the given, or any part of it, as *totally* problematic. And he would write in such a way that, reading what he has written for us, we shall be the better able to bear the burden. Only through the disciplined study of what he writes shall we be able to learn to bear the burden. Solving the problem the poet puts to us is, simply enough, to learn to live with the problem, with the ambiguities of our lives as we become increasingly conscious of them.

What results, as regards the qualities of literary works, is a special "open" sort of resolution of the problematic and the ambiguous: qualities we call tension, or irony, or paradox, all of which are aspects of that quality we acknowledge in ourselves when we are most self-conscious, most conscious of our finitude, our limits.

### Relation of Literature to Other Disciplines

Let me repeat: studying, knowing, appreciating a literary work, we solve problems posed by learning to live with them as problems. For me, this is a crucial point, and it entails much of importance for the study of literature as a discipline in relation to other disciplines. Understanding this point, I think, is a necessary condition of understanding the structure of literary study as a discipline, and thus of the proper teaching of literature.

Imagine if you will a spectrum of the disciplines, with, toward one end, mathematics, and, toward the other, the study of literature. And imagine the other disciplines spread out between, with the sciences nearest mathematics, and in turn, moving toward literary study, the applied sciences, the behavorial sciences, the social sciences, and then history—the latter closest to literature. (Philosophy, let me say, would seem to hover over all.) The arrangement is a neat one, and significant. For note that mathematics, at its purest, is self-referential; that is, at its purest, it has no content but itself—since it is the study of logical relationships as such, insofar as the mind can conceive of them. As one moves on the spectrum into the sciences and beyond, one finds disciplines with increasing content—that is, with increasing reference to the world at large. The modes of inquiry characteristic of the disciplines nearest mathematics on the spectrum take their style from mathematics; they represent ways we know the world as, by delimiting the portion, or the aspect, of it which we would know, we can use the methods of mathematics in carrying out our inquiry. Here we have much precision, much predictability, and often much control. But the price we pay for precision, predictability, and control is that of maximum selectivity and delimitation. The physicist, for example, knows what he knows so well precisely because he considers the world at large within certain quite logical, in a way quite "arbitrary," mathematically definable limitations. His power has as a necessary condition impersonality. And as we move across the spectrum toward the study of literature, we find disciplines with decreasing power for precision, predictability, and control; for as

their human content, their *ambiguously* human content, increases, they are farther and farther removed from the self-referential elegance of pure mathematics. When we come to the study of literature, we have come to a discipline which centers on works which have as their content all or anything that is at a given time imaginable about the world and the men in it. We have come to a discipline, our discipline, wherein the quality of self-reference is virtually absent, because irrelevant.

Surely there is, in the study of literature, precision, predictability, and control. And surely there is in literary study something analogous to self-reference—namely, "wholeness," or "organic perfection," or "presentational immediacy." But such qualities are of another order from their analogues in mathematics and the sciences. They are of another order because they derive not from the impersonality of the discipline itself but from the personality (the poet as man speaking to men) of those whose works on which the discipline centers. A literary work, taking into account as much of the world as it can, with no holds barred, refers ultimately not to itself but to the selves to which it is addressed. (I do not read a poem, it has been said; the poem reads me.) And the discipline which would comprehend the literary work must take this fact as of surpassing importance. Which is to say: that the study of literature as a discipline must be constructed according to the nature of literature as, exploring to the utmost limits the human condition, it exposes fundamental human problems and would teach us not to solve but to live with them.

## Problems Faced in Teaching Literature

If my sketch of the range and positions of disciplines on the spectrum is at all correct, it will explain and point to the solution of certain problems we face as teachers of literature.

First, in teaching literature we must understand exactly why and how we need to attend to content (or theme, or subject matter). Since, at its end of the spectrum of the disciplines, literary study centers on works which would fully comprehend a portion of our lives and the life of our world; and further, since such works render the given as maximally problematic—we must ask just how much our students, at their various age levels, can take. How much ambiguity can they be exposed to, and in what form? All inquiry, from mathematics to the study of literature, must induce a certain amount of anxiety and concern, a certain amount of doubt about that which one, in his commonsensical view of life, had

taken for granted. But the sorts of doubts, or anxieties, induced by mathematical study are surely of a different kind from those induced by the study of literature. Indeed, the kind shifts as one moves across the spectrum from mathematics through the sciences and social sciences toward the humanities and the arts, literature among them. It might well be true that in the spiralling curriculum called for by Professor Bruner for mathematics and the sciences, the specific content of what is studied does not matter; what matters is the capacity of the student to reach a certain level of sophistication, or abstraction, in the mode of inquiry. But I suspect that in the humanities and the arts, in literary study above all, the specific content does matter. For, recall from my sketch of the spectrum of disciplines, as one moves toward the study of literature, one moves away from self-reference and a self-referential system. One moves away from the situation in which the mode of inquiry dominates, even defines, that into which inquiry is made toward a situation (in literary study) in which the mode of inquiry largely derives from that into which inquiry is made—which is, it cannot be too much emphasized, literary works in which a portion of our lives and the life of our world is taken as maximally problematic and ambiguous. Set theory and scientific laws are one thing, and may well be gone into at a varying range of age levels, in varying ways. But the stuff of literature is another thing. And we should, I think be much concerned how much, at varying age levels, students can bear. For the problematic and ambiguous mode of literary works not only challenges one's capacity to make appropriate inquiries into their nature, function, and meaning, but also may quite literally threaten, by virtue of their content, the well-being and emotional stability of readers.

Second, we must differentiate among the modes of inquiry appropriate to the various disciplines on the spectrum. Note the extreme contrast between mathematics and the study of literature. To study mathematics one *does* mathematics. To study literature one does not *do* literature—that is, one does not write poems, stories, and plays. The explanation of the difference, I think, lies in the degree of self-reference and relation to content involved. Where self-reference is maximal and content minimal, as in mathematics, the student must undergo the discipline of learning the ways in which the self-contained, internally consistent system works. Where self-reference is minimal, or virtually nonexistent, and relation to content maximal, the student must undergo the discipline of learning how to bring to bear on the object of inquiry all that he already knows of himself and the world, so as to make it a

means of systematic understanding of himself, his world, and their problems. The reader is part of the content of literature in a way he is not part of the content of mathematics. I think we make a strategic mistake in pedagogy when we tell ourselves that "creative" acts, whether in mathematics or in literature, are closely akin. They may well be. But we understand mathematics differently from the way we understand literature, since the objects of our understanding, by virtue of their differing degrees of self-reference and relation to their content, put differing intrinsic claims on us and on our students.

I am not suggesting that students should not be encouraged to write poems, or stories, or plays. I am suggesting, however, that the relationship between such acts and literary study is not nearly so close as is that between doing mathematics and understanding it. The educational function of writing poems, or stories, or plays, I suggest, consists in getting a sense of language as a *medium* for literature—even as painting or potting or whatever teaches the student something about the media of the visual arts. I should think, moreover, that it is quite important to encourage students to write, but that this is essentially propaedeutic to the study of literature. Living in a mass culture as we do, bombarded by language drained of integral value, we do well to teach our students that they can use language as well as be used by it; to teach them to respect, even to understand, the struggles a writer goes through as he takes his language as medium. But, by the same token, we must teach our students to acknowledge the difference between their playing with language and the writer's working with it. My point is that the student of mathematics learns the discipline involved by imitating the act of the mathematician. The student of literature is not going to learn his discipline by imitating the act of the poet. He must become a critic.

## From Understanding to Interpretation

Thus at last I come to the second part of my title: "From Understanding to Interpretation." I take criticism to be our name for the mode of inquiry appropriate to the study of literature—our discipline. As you well know, literary criticism in our time has made great and exciting advances. But these advances, so I am informed, have been little reflected in the development of elementary curricula. In my lifetime as a student and teacher, a revolution has been worked in the teaching of literature in colleges and universities. But, so I am informed, there is little that is revolutionary in the teaching of literature in the schools. One reason may be that whereas in colleges and universities

the teaching of literature does not have to be justified by relating it to the teaching of other subjects, in the elementary schools such a relationship must be established, if only because there students are not ready for the discipline-by-discipline segmentation of their lives which (so one presumes) they are ready for by the time they enter colleges and universities.

Of course, what I am saying is by way of justifying my disquisition on literary study and its place on the spectrum of the disciplines. I hope that as a kind of outsider here, or a guest, I am not wrong when I think that elementary teachers, above all, must have a sense of the range and scope, the powers and limitations, of the disciplines they would inculcate in their students. Range and scope, powers and limitations, I repeat. For the power of mathematics lies precisely in its limitations, what it does not set out to deal with as well as what it does set out to deal with. And to take a discipline closer to the middle of the spectrum: in the study of history, we are concerned to consider our lives and the life of our world as certain key events or acts or persons may be seen in chronological and ideological relationship to one another. The method of historical study is such as to give us the means to find out what *actually* happened. In making an historical inquiry we must assume that, whatever the inherent ambiguities in events out of the past, we can at least put them in a kind of order which, by virtue of minimizing the ambiguous quality, will maximize the quality of order and interrelationship.

But what if we want to understand, insofar as we can, just that ambiguity? Then we go to literature, to works created as our means to achieve just that sort of understanding. But note well: the price we pay for understanding through literature is that of giving up as our central concern what *actually* happened. And we are concerned, on the other hand, with what *possibly* happened, or could have happened. We are, in short, in the realm of the human imagination and its power to create fictional accounts of our lives and the life of our world. The writer (I mean the creator of literature) tells lies about facts, as it were, in order to tell truths about human beings as they are bound by facts. Again: a commonplace, but one worth emphasizing. Unless we know that the language and events and actions which constitute *King Lear* or *The Waste Land* or *Herzog*, or whatever—unless we know that such language and events and actions are fictive—we could not bear what we read and hear and see. Thus the power of literature and of literary understanding is inextricably related to a major limitation: that this is a fiction, a product of the imagination; that it is not actually but only

possibly true. Indeed, a crucial stage in the development of literary understanding—one the study of which should surely interest elementary teachers—is that in which we learn to differentiate fantasy (where we confuse the actual and the possible) from fiction (where we deliberately and systematically cultivate the possible). Literary criticism as a discipline is above all concerned with such a development and such a differentiation. And I should think that from the outset it is the task of the teachers of literature to guide his students accordingly. He will do so all the better, I am convinced, if he understands the powers and limitations of literature, their interrelationship, and the place of literary study on the spectrum of disciplines.

## Essence of Interpretation of Literature

Modern criticism, then, assumes that the power of literature is the power of the capacity, through the exercise of the creative imagination, to make fictions which will let us confront directly the problematic nature, the ambiguities, inherent in our lives and the life of our world. Through the interpretation of a literary work, through our disciplining ourselves to assenting to it, we gain a vital insight to the extreme possibilities—tragic through comic—of our nature as humans. That vital insight is the understanding toward which criticism would guide us. Because it is an understanding, through fiction, not of actuality but of possibility, it might well be said to be an understanding which passeth all peace. It is not an understanding which will give us, except incidentally, information; nor is it an understanding which will, except incidentally, guide us in the practice of living. It is an understanding whereby, as I have said, through appreciation of the literary work, we "appreciate." I like to think that the concrete and practical effect of literary study, perhaps its ultimate end, is to store up in myself and my student's an ever-increasing, ever-enlarged sense of the enormous number of ways that it is possible for men to exercise and realize their essential humanity. This is what I mean when I use the word "appreciate" etymologically—and say that we appreciate; we become richer, fuller; we grow. And I like to think that, as a result of such appreciation, we can grow more tolerant of actualities of the sort which in fact are alien to us; for we are equipped to see them as possibilities. There is thus, as a kind of follow-through effect of literary study, the development of a certain imaginative flexibility and all that such flexibility entails for the development of the full, free, healthy individual in a world whose

conditions so often militate against fullness, freedom, and healthy individualism.

Recall Mr. Ransom's words which I quoted toward the beginning of these remarks, that ours

> is a horrid as well as a beautiful world, but without the horror we should never focus on the beauty; without death there would be no relish for life; without danger, no courage without savagery, no gentleness; and without the background of our frequent ignominy, no human dignity and pride.

Note that Mr. Ransom names extreme qualities. And note that major literature always seems somehow to deal with such qualities. And recall that I have said that only in fictions can we bear to attend to such qualities. The extremes, simply enough, encompass the vast range of human possibilities. The vastness of the range, which entails the extremes of the problematic and the ambiguous, is what puts literary study in its extreme position on the spectrum of the disciplines, and is what has led, in modern times, to the devlopment of theories and methods of literary study which would teach us so to interpret literary wo.ks as to ensure the sort of understanding appropriate to them.

### Nature of Understanding: Role of Explication

Understanding—and then, and only then, interpretation. What is involved in proper understanding? First, that the student and his teacher be prepared. They must have as much sheer information as they need, the sort of information which is developed in what used to be called exegesis. They must know what the words in a poem or story mean; they must know what the form of the poem or story means, what conventions are involved in its use; they must recognize allusions; etc.; etc. (For example, it is necessary in reading *Huckleberry Finn*, to know something of the sort of books Tom Sawyer reads; helpful to know who Walter Scott was and what he had come to stand for; useful to know what "Territory" Huck alludes to at the end.) The more one knows—knows relevantly—the richer the poem or story becomes, the more one comprehends it, the more one finds oneself comprehended by it; the more one appreciates. All this, again, constitutes a commonplace. I remind you of it only to emphasize that modern criticism assumes modern scholarship, assumes above all a teacher who makes sure that his students are ready to read and interpret properly.

Then: the act of understanding itself. Another word is explication. Here the need is to focus on the work in and of itself; above all, to fore-

stall hastily arrived at interpretation. Our natural tendency, owing to our natural psychic inertia, is to want to place the work in our world, rather than to do what is proper, to place ourselves in the world of the work. (Recall: I don't read the poem; the poem reads me.) A poem, say one of Frost's, can be deceptively simple—and lead a student, reporting on his reading of it, to use it as a means of talking about himself; or of one of its features which, for whatever reason, strikes him as particularly interesting. He may or may not turn out to be right, but he has not properly earned his interpretation until he has understood fully: read the poem with great care, heard it clearly; remarked how its prosodic structure serves to emphasize certain features and deemphasize certain others; noted the character and quality of its figurative language; sensed the special "style" of the voice which is speaking, and attended to the qualifications, as the poem reveals them, of the speaker; followed through the argument, or dialectic, or plot of the poem.

It is in exercises of this sort that modern criticism abounds. They need by no means to be mysterious exercises, however difficult they can be. Such exercises are the necessary condition of proper understanding of a literary work. They must be rigorously carried out, in a thoroughly disciplined manner. Carried out thus, they pull the reader into the poem and into the world it creates. The reader, if he lets the poem do its work on him, comes to assent to it and to the possibilities it reveals. He has achieved understanding.

Then, and only then, is he ready to ask the interpretive question: "What difference does it make to me that I have assented to this poem?" The poem has become part of his life. He has appreciated. The poem has become, specifically in its function as poem, instrumental in the kind of humanism which I take it is the aim of education, the aim of all the disciplines of education, at all levels. The student, guided by his teacher, might well ask the interpretive question only informally. But he should ask it, if only to get going his full appreciation. The critic, who may well be the teacher, tends to ask it formally. And whatever his answer, however he "relates" literature to life, he will not have done his job properly unless he has first correctly understood the poem. The varieties of criticism in our time, let me add, are complementary insofar as they all proceed from common understanding to differing interpretations.

### Reading the Base for Teaching

I have talked, however briefly, only about the act of reading. Nonetheless this is a rather shorthanded account of the reading, and teaching,

of literature in general. Moreover, I am quite aware that I have on the whole not talked of particular works, and of the particular ways of approaching them. My concern has been to let you see how modern criticism would put us all in our place, would teach us to see how important that place is and what we can (and cannot) do as we occupy it. To recall Mr. Ransom's words again: we must insist that we are all concerned with one world at a time, and also that, as teachers of literature, we have a vital role in it. My concern today has been, assuming the vitality, to define the role and to report to you on some aspects of modern critical theory's definition of that role.

But let the last words be a poet's. The poet is Wallace Stevens. The poem is called, not quite irrelevantly, "The Well Dressed Man with a Beard": [2]

Let me interpret the poem a little, relying on your having understood it. The "yes" is the yes of the poet, the man of high imagination. And whatever the subject of the poem (however nay-saying it might be, the fact that we have the poem), that we can discipline ourselves into assenting to it, makes for a "yes" which transcends all nay-saying. The poem bids us confront our world as totally problematic, totally ambiguous in its very givenness. The poem is, by virtue of its nature as a fiction, our means to say "yes"—and thus a major means of our realizing our deep-

est and highest humanity. The last line in Stevens' poem surely records something which we as teachers all know: That "It can never be satisfied, the mind, never." Yet the mind must seek satisfaction. This is an aspect of its share in problematic, ambiguous human givenness—that it must seek what it shall never quite find. And poetry, literature in general, records and vitalizes the seeking. Which is education. Which for us is the study of literature.

### Notes

[1] "The Concrete Universal: Observations on the Understanding of Poetry," *Kenyon Review.* 21 (1959), 140.

[2] *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1954), p. 247.

# 4

## Old Books and New Directions

EDWARD W. ROSENHEIM, JR.

*I*n recent months it has ceased to be stylish to use such phrases as "knowledge explosion" or "information explosion." Perhaps the rapid consignment of these terms to the limbo of the unfashionable simply results from their being rather silly in the first place. But perhaps, also, it is because the phenomenon they describe is so real, so formidable—and because it makes us all feel so awkward and ineffectual—that we'd like to forget about it for a while. I imagine I could, therefore, seem more lovable to you if I urged that teachers of literature *should* forget the violent expansion, proliferation, and reorganization of knowledge in other areas, and if I relied on the ancient and obvious point that the pursuit of essentially timeless problems and pleasures and truths, as they are found in literature, is the proper activity of my calling.

Unfortunately for you, perhaps, I am not going to take this way out. Confronted by the facts of the "explosion," each element in the educational world feels its own special embarrassments, its own need to come to terms of some kind with the dizzying developments that education can, at best, only half-anticipate. Virtually all kinds of scientists and social scientists—and many kinds of humanists as well—can document these problems for us with rather terrifying thoroughness. They are, indeed, dealing with areas which lend strength to Robert Oppenheimer's observation that our age is marked by the "prevalence of novelty," that the new is in truth far more abundant than the familiar. And the more thoughtful of these scientists and scholars can address themselves to the revolutionary ways by which alone education in their areas can accommodate itself to what, explosion or not, is certainly a revolution.

### Literary Materials and Problems Comparatively Stable

But we teachers of literature have our own, highly peculiar source of embarrassment in the face of these explosions. It is an embarrassment

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that proceeds from the fact that, relatively speaking, we have no explosion of our own—that, as I have suggested, the materials and problems which traditionally are our province are comparatively stable and immune to change.

To be sure, if pressed, we can probably construct our own modest version of an explosion, particularly if we draw on areas that lie beyond the substance of literature itself. It is obvious, for example, that one genuine explosion, the advent of the paperback, has had important consequences for the conduct of our teaching. It is equally clear that literature—even as literacy has become nearly universal—has acquired new and immensely powerful competitors for the attention of its students. New sciences, too, have been directly brought to bear upon literature, and you have, perhaps, been reminded by other speakers of the scope of linguistic science and its implications for literary study. And this leads to the more general observation that the circumstances under which our job is carried out have clearly changed, even if the materials of the job have not. The condition and knowledge and values and problems of contemporary society are astonishingly different from those of even the recent past—so much so, indeed, that one is tempted to say that the kinds of people we are teaching have changed far more than has what we teach them.

It can also, of course, be argued that the corpus of literature is an ever-growing thing, and that dramatic—perhaps violent—developments in literary art have recently occurred and that further, equally dramatic ones can be looked forward to. I shall stifle my temptation to grind a favorite axe and assert that many of the special qualities of modern verse are found in Blake or that Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* strikes me as quite typical theatre of the absurd or that *Tristram Shandy* remains the most novel novel ever written. The point is that, for better or worse, the contemporary (as perhaps distinguished from the "modern") is not—and, some would say, can never be—very clearly reflected in the academic teaching of literature.

The very word *academic*, in fact, illuminates the situation. Most commonly, of course, the word describes whatever pertains to the school—or more particularly, the college or university. Among additional, familiar meanings of the word, however, is that slightly pejorative one which summons up the image of an institution like the British Royal Academy; objects—usually objects of art—become academic in this sense when they are safely, permanently, and inalterably ensconced in an academy or

museum, as embodiments of some very orthodox conception of excellence.

The anthologies, textbooks, and reading lists of our literature courses are, for the most part, academic in both senses. In effect, a work of literature reaches the Hall of Fame at almost the same moment it enters the Halls of Ivy. And the objects of our scholarly as well as our educational attentions are, again, largely academic in both senses. I pick up—believe me, for purposes of using a random sample—the latest issue of *PMLA* to discover that of sixteen articles, only two deal with writers of the twentieth century—the dead Faulkner and the by-now-venerable W. H. Auden, whose very presence in this journal attests that they have, indeed, found their niches in the academy.

Now I happen to think that this state of affairs is not only largely inevitable but, on the whole, quite right. To be sure, I entertain occasional fantasies about somewhat jazzing up the learned journals, about urging that our poetry anthologies have a little more of Robert Lowell even if this means a little less of James Russell Lowell, or about suggesting that our lip service to the contemporary sacrifice some of its safe, sane, modern but securely academic Audens and Faulkners and Hemingways and try a precarious go-around with a few young stormy petrels of the literary scene.

Nonetheless we must face the facts. In most of the world of natural and social science, learning means little if it is not up-to-date. For these colleagues of ours, there is no real physics or astronomy or sociology which is not today's rather than yesterday's, and the past is important almost entirely to the extent that it is useful in exploring the present— and the future. We students of literature, in contrast, are singular in that our central concerns, our materials, and our problems lie in the products of the past—often a very remote past which has been all but forgotten by our scientist-brethren. I needn't labor the reasons for this, since they lie in just such obvious facts as those which, at the outset of these remarks, I refused to use as an escape-hatch. Hume, among many others, has put the matter far better than I can when, after noting the shifting character of scientific or political wisdom, he asserts that, in contrast, "the same Homer who pleased at Athens and Rome two thousand years ago is still admired at Paris and at London," or again that "Terence and Virgil maintain an universal, undisputed empire over the minds of men."

We are concerned then with a relatively stable, conservative body of human productions which, while it grows, does so—for any important

academic purposes—at a comparatively slow rate, and certainly not an explosive one. And, as I say, I think this is as it should be. Why, then, should we be concerned with explosions at all?

## Impact of Knowledge Explosion on Literary Study

The answer lies in certain plain facts which, again, I have already alluded to. For the explosion of knowledge has had certain consequences "across the board," however unevenly it may have occurred, area by area, discipline by discipline. When change is really major, it strongly tends to communicate itself, even though, as I shall shortly point out, the changes bred of change can be strange and paradoxical offspring.

When our habits, our values, our needs, our ambitions change, they change with respect to virtually all of our experience, to the way we think about ourselves, our society, our universe, and our productions—including our literary productions. And so it seems natural to look for change, not necessarily in books themselves, the traditional objects of our attention, but in the ways in which they are studied and taught, interpreted, judged, and related to the changing world of which they are a part.

Let me say at once that I believe change of this sort has occurred. It has, indeed, occurred so energetically in the past three decades, that most of us English teachers know pretty well what is meant when we hear talk about the "revolution" in our thinking about literature. Let me add that, although it is often referred to as the "critical revolution," it has not been a mere intramural development, limited to the rarefied ranks of the critics or professional scholars. Its repercussions have profoundly affected the way in which teachers are taught—and hence obviously how they themselves teach; it is reflected in a huge number of textbooks and manuals and even curricula; it has supplied new premises, new vocabularies, new values for the reviews not only in the literary journals but in the daily papers; it has altered our conceptions of taste; and it has, not least, helped shape the nature of literary activity itself.

Not all of the changes which have affected our ways of dealing with literature are directly connected with criticism. In fact, the first of the three major changes I have chosen to mention to you is only indirectly related to the critical office. This change is simply the manifestation in my profession of that familiar affair, the drive toward specialization. Now I assure you, I am not about to beat this tired horse at any length or even to express any particularly passionate views on the subject. My chief purpose in mentioning it is to make clear one point I have already

mentioned—that patterns in the activities of professional scholars and critics have clear consequences for the total educational enterprise.

It is probably unnecessary to mention, for instance, that most of you who have majored in English during recent years were, in all likelihood, taught by persons whose greatest institutional value lay not in what they could directly do for you but in their alleged mastery of particularized areas of literary knowledge. Their concern for broader problems, literary or nonliterary, their commitment to teaching, their qualities of personality, character, and intellect were, in all probability, matters of secondary importance to those who employed them. If you were to ask the chairman of a good, lively university English department today just what kind of man his department needs most, I am willing to bet that four out of five times the answer would be something like "a good Romantic period man." I think it most unlikely that he would say "a wise man" or "a devoted man" or even "a genuinely learned man," and I think the reason is not that these qualities are tacitly assumed to be prior requirements but that, at this moment in the history of English teaching, they are actually held to be of secondary significance.

Or to take another quick example. Like most college teachers, I am sometimes visited by amiable publishers' representatives with the idea that I might be able to prepare a book of some kind, often for high school and occasionally for elementary school use. No such caller has ever come to see me because I am interested in education itself or because I might be aware of its problems. They have come to see me because I am supposed to know something about one or two quite limited segments of literature. When I have ventured to ask how these fragments fit into a course or a curriculum, let alone a scheme for the education of a young person, the conversation has fizzled out abruptly. The same fate overcomes my attempt to introduce such quaint old-fashioned questions as "Why should a kid be asked to read this?" or "What can a youngster read most profitably—and when?" The publishers' beagles have not come to visit me about educational matters but because I am supposed, like several thousand of my colleagues, to be an expert of a very limited sort.

The result of being treated like experts is that what we communicate to education at any level is almost entirely expertise—and often watered-down expertise. We turn out some pretty flossy texts, with impeccable footnotes. Sometimes the more learned and ambitious of us tackle broader undertakings, such as anthologies of substantial range, and these generally show sound editorial standards and unassailable academic taste.

What they lack, with a few blessed exceptions, is any recognition of the realities of teaching, of what you'll forgive me for calling the "gut" problems of the classroom. It is the rare text, at least the rare expert-produced text, which reveals any awareness, for example, of the diversity of background and ability in the student population; of the problems, however one views them, of initially engaging students in literature; or of the possibility of relating reading to the student's extraliterary experience, that problem once respectably embodied in a label which is now dismissed with wild hoots of utter derision—"literature and life."

The situation is simply that a massive, presumably intelligent group of humanists is asked to rule out of bounds, as irrelevant to its professional activities, vast areas of humane problems and experiences. Let me simply put the matter more pointedly and uncomfortably. This paper, for better or for worse, would be regarded by many of my colleagues as not a "professional" paper; it does not deal with that small area of literature with which I am supposed to be professionally familiar. The fact that it deals with questions I have repeatedly and painfully encountered in the conduct of a career as *teacher* is beside the point. And if my more generous colleagues were to applaud my undertaking to talk to you, it would probably be in admiration of my courage in thus tackling matters which lie outside my "professional competence."

### Change in Critical Concerns: Focus on the Text

Let me pass to a second robust development of recent years—one which, in this case, lies close to the heart of the so-called "critical revolution." This is what Robert Heilman has succinctly called "the shift from matrix to organism" or the focusing of "attention on the dynamics of the work as thing-in-itself." Let me put this shift very briefly and oversimply in autobiographical terms, which ought to awaken some autobiographical echoes in some of the longer memories in the room.

When I was a student in high school and, for the most part, during my college days as well, most of us were conscious of two very distinct realms surrounding the study of literature. One was the realm of facts, or certainty. These facts had mainly to do with the *context* of a literary work—the circumstances in which it was produced, the biography and historical locus of its author, the authentic historical events and conditions and people plainly reflected in its pages (and often helpfully identified by footnotes). If the search for fact sometimes led into the text itself, it was usually confined to noting such incontrovertible truths as that the poem had fourteen iambic pentameter lines and could therefore be called a

sonnet, that Macbeth had indubitably done bad things which led to his bad end, or that Sidney Carton achieved an equally bad end but it was a far, far better thing than he had ever done before.

Beyond the realm of fact and certainty lay the realm of the speculative, the uncertain, and, in effect, the virtually undiscussable. Here lay such inevitable but terribly uneasy questions as "Why is this book called a novel?" "What is a novel anyhow?" Why does it begin and end where it does?" "What makes this comedy so funny?" "Why does this character behave so outrageously?" and that most natural yet imponderable question of all, "Is this book any good?"

Now our intellectually secure generation had been conditioned to being asked questions for which there were clearly right and clearly wrong answers. In our classes in science and mathematics and language and history, the principal challenge and satisfaction was to "get the answer." And it is therefore not strange that we felt—and many of our teachers felt—uncomfortable in the literary realm of the uncertain, in the forbidding presence of questions which couldn't be really solved. Nor is it strange that our tentative efforts to offer our individual interpretations and judgments would soon come to a halt with the reflection that there is no disputing about taste and hence, presumably, no profitable discussion of tastes. Thus it was that we fell back on whatever, in literature classes, could offer certainty, piously remembering the facts of Shelley's life, noting that Shakespeare's heroines were played by men, defining the prosodic characteristics of the heroic couplet, observing that in an Elizabethan text "moe" meant "more," and so on.

And what we knew about the labors of scholarship confirmed us in the belief that what mattered was, in Heilman's terms, the matrix rather than the organism. Scholars, we understood, concerned themselves with the lives of writers, with literary movements, with the enticing historical or philological facts that wound up, in neat digestible form, as footnotes.

What very few of us *did* know at the time was that there was a growing body of serious scholar-critics who were addressing themselves to the literary organism itself. These were men who believed that the individual text and the unique experience it offered would be examined, if not with certainty, at least with rigor and responsibility. These were men who stoutly addressed themselves to the questions which had no "right" answer, who insisted that there *is* disputing about tastes, and that such disputes could be systematic, persuasive, and profitable. And these were men whose influence not only on the criticism but on the teaching and

the reading of literature had grown with astonishing speed and pervasiveness. If, to the younger of you, my description of my own early education in literature seems archaic and faintly incredible, it is precisely because what is sometimes called "formal criticism," the discussion of how a literary work is put together and how it operates, has become a commonplace in many areas of education. We have not often, to be sure, been forced to accept a special "brand" of criticism. The revolution I have referred to is not limited by any means to the so-called "new critics" but has been aided by some of their most bitter anta    :sts—antagonists, nonetheless, who were prepared to join issue with them in a common arena, whose differences with them largely lay in the questions of how books should be read, interpreted, and judged, but who agreed that close reading, interpretation, and judgment were the central activities of literary study.

## Consequence of New Criticism

Let me for a moment say something more detailed about the consequence of this emphasis for the teaching of literature—and teaching, I should say, at every level from that at which children first have mastered the simplest reading tasks to the college and even graduate school. It has meant, to put it plainly, that certain questions are more important than others—indeed that, as I see it, there are two central questions. One is "What happens in this novel or play or poem?" And this is not the same thing as "What is it about?" for that can be answered "It's about love—or death—or the poet's personality—or the pleasures of childhood." *What happens* on the other hand, thrusts attention on the *events*, the goings-on, of the work—on its development or structure if you will.

The other central question, of course, is *How do you feel about what happens?* For, it can be argued, a work of art truly "exists" only when it is responsibly encountered, and the ultimate aspect of the literary experience is thus to be found both in the work and in our encountering selves.

It is in the interplay of these two questions that the structure and character of the work emerge and that our understanding and response to it become enlarged. We can see this, in very clear terms, for instance, in an experience with the simplest story. When we first ask what happens, we can get, as a rule, a simple statement of *plot:* "This man kills a dragon; this boy hits a home run with the bases loaded; this girl is punished by her teacher." When we ask a further simple question, "Are you

glad or sorry, and why?" the answer is likely to shift attention to *character*: the man is brave; the boy is a good guy; the little girl has been a tattletale and deserves some kind of punishment. And when we press on and ask how we know these things about the character, we find ourselves looking at particulars of diction—what the author tells us, what the characters themselves say. Or we can move in other directions: why does the story of the little girl particularly interest us? Because it is set in a schoolroom and presents a familiar situation? How, then, has the author characterized his schoolroom, his setting? Is the situation really very common, or has he made it seem familiar and believable, and if so, how? Given this basic account of the story and recognizing our response to it, what is achieved by its particular parts—or why does the author choose to start and to stop where he does?

And, though this may seem a little harder to see, something of the same sort can be done with poetry. This emphasis on text—this "what happens" procedure—can even be applied to something like

> The world is so full of a number of things
> I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings.

Now, if, with the "new" emphasis, we seek to regard this as a literary construction, we do not first ask if it is true, or if we have learned anything from it, or who wrote it, or why. We again ask what happens. If there is no plot here, there is something analogous to plot—a statement which can be divided into two other statements, one of which happens after the other, for the second proposition clearly depends on our acceptance of the first. Moreover, there is something like character here— a speaker, with a simple, sunny view of the world that prompts him to draw his own sunny conclusion about happiness. It is a child's view, a child's world, and a child's simple     yet imaginative language. And if we are to accept the poem on its own terms, then its charming childishness must be firmly noted—and we cannot be concerned about its lack of sophistication or about the failure of its naive philosophy to conform with a reality which, even as children ourselves, we find to be very different from that of the poem. We can even become more particularized. We can note that "full of a number of things" is a dismayingly vague kind of statement—that "things" can mean anything at all. In a scientific tract, an argument, a longer poem perhaps, this kind of statement would be outrageously inexact. But the character of the text, the effect it produces, governs the success of what the author chooses to do, including even his choice of single words. Any specific "number," any more particular word than "things," would not do full justice to the all-out,

undiscriminating, uncritical delight with which the child, or perhaps the child-like adult, in this poem surveys his world.

### Need for Broader Context for Criticism

This is a very simplified suggestion of what direct but developing experience with a story or poem can involve. But you are sophisticated people—and even this verse doubtless raises other questions for you, moral, psychological, and perhaps even a historian's nagging interest in what age and circumstances could produce such unqualified optimism. Yet, genuine as these questions may be, in the high period of revolution they are—or would have been—in danger of being dismissed as irrelevant.

For humanistic history, like most history, has its pendulum-swings. With the new emphasis on the work itself, the awareness of context tended to become peripheral. The focus of criticism and eventually of teaching proceeded on an assumption, frankly stated by one writer of an introductory text on literature, that a poetic work is "aesthetic experience for us only as it lies before us in the here and now, as it affects our living, twentieth-century selves." It is only with such an emphasis, such writers further argue, that the work can be experienced *as* literature. If a novel conveys a strong moral message, this can be regarded as central only if we approach it as moral philosophers. If it reflects important historical circumstances, these receive primary attention only if we approach it as historians. If it displays complex and illuminating versions of social or cultural problems or if it invokes ancient myths and archetypes, these must dominate our experience with the book only if we approach it as sociologists or cultural anthropologists or some similar kind of behavioral scientist. In short, the historian, the philologist, the bibliographer, the psychologist each has his own characteristic approach —each is entirely legitimate and constitutionally within his rights—yet the approach to the work *as* literature must be by a man who is committed to literary experience for its own sake. As I've suggested, the critics have squabbled strenuously over which of the possibly purely literary approaches is correct, but they have generally been at pains to dissociate themselves from other disciplines.

### The Third Development—"New Pluralism"

You may have noticed just now my repeated use of the word "approach," and this brings me to the third major development which has characterized the revolution in literary study. This development, closely

related to the other two I have discussed, might ambitiously be called "the new pluralism."

I prefer the less respectful title, "the approach-approach" to literature. The premises of the "approach-approach" are simple enough. A single work of literature, if it is sufficiently rich, may interest us for many different reasons, may be interpreted in many different ways, may be judged on many different grounds. The important thing is that we know what we are doing—and what we have chosen not to do. If, to take an improbable example, we wish to read *Tom Jones* from the standpoint of a Freudian clinician, we are at liberty to do so and to interpret and judge the work in this light. But we must recognize that, in pursuing such a course, we are barring ourselves from its whole dazzling array of purely literary delights, which seems to be chief reason for its continuing popularity. If we wish to read *Bleak House* as a social document, embodying a singularly searching view of certain British legal and welfare institutions, let us by all means proceed—but proceed as social historians, in the awareness that we are neglecting major sources of its literary appeal. If, even assuming we must concentrate on our direct, present encounter with the work as a literary work, we find in Gray's *Elegy* the poem described by Cleanth Brooks, we must, at the same time, recognize that we are not finding the poem described by an equally "formal" critic, R. S. Crane.

## Limitations of Single Approach

The living witness to "the approach-approach" can be found in many of the so-called case books or "guided study" volumes, those paperbound affairs in which a single work, usually of recognized merit, is surrounded by a cluster of scholarly and critical articles, each of which presumably "approaches" the work in its own special way. The peripheral character of contextual studies is generally reflected in the dutiful inclusion of a few biographical and bibliographical materials, usually quite clearly separated from what is regarded as "criticism." The "criticism" itself offers an artful selection of conflicting analyses and judgments, among which the student is more or less dispassionately invited to choose.

Choose. This is perhaps that word which explains my uneasiness with the "approach-approach" and so many of the casebooks and collections in which it is represented. An approach is a single thing, a single avenue, to be taken at the sacrifice of pursuing other avenues, however amiably we agree that they may possibly be worth taking. We cannot, to alter a

metaphor, have a foot on each street; to do so would be to mingle and confuse principles which are highly distinct and often incompatible. We are, indeed, often explicitly warned against such an attempt. One distinguished critic, in a key article to a highly popular casebook, defines five separate approaches to a famous poem, before producing his own, sixth one. It will not help, he argues, "to combine all these critical modes into a single criticism which has the virtues of each and the deficiencies of none. . . . A syncretic criticism [as he calls such a combination] is invertebrate, and will yield not an integral poem, but a ragout."[1]

Thus critical pluralism, at least of the approach-approach kind, calls for commitment—which is a fine thing to call for. Inevitably, it also calls for the rejection (or for the deliberate suspension, if not abandonment) of a huge array of alternative questions to be asked about a book, ways of reading a book, satisfactions to be found in a book. And the assertions with which such gestures of rejection are accompanied often sound remarkably like those apologetic slogans of the scholarly specialist: "out of my line," "irrelevant," "not really profitable," and even, amazingly, "too narrow," the last being, I suspect, a sort of shorthand way of saying "My narrowness is different from your narrowness and what's more it's not as narrow."

And this brings me to a generalization about the three rather closely related kinds of change I have been discussing. I imagine you have already anticipated it. For in these trends which have contributed to a palpable revolution in literary study, the tendency has been toward a sort of constriction, a cutting out of ever more clearly defined slices of the humanistic pie for special attention and special effort. Now this tendency may be good or bad, and the language used to describe it can be derisive or laudatory. Thus, while one man can say we have moved toward wholesome rigor, another can say we have moved toward rigidity. And "concentration" can be a word of praise or blame, depending on many things. But I would submit that we have generally decided to acknowledge the importance of concentration. We are urged, today, to concentrate our skills as specialists, to concentrate our attention as students of the text or of some clear aspect to the context, to concentrate our critical principles in commitment to a sustained, consistent approach.

All this is, no doubt, a product of—or perhaps an answer to—the knowledge explosion. Where diffusion becomes thin and unsatisfying, concentration is a tempting alternative. Where the scope of inquiry becomes unmanageable and frustrating, we naturally incline to settle for

what is manageable and rewarding. Today the jack-of-all-trades is not only ludicrous, he is an impossibility. We cannot be entirely blamed for succumbing to the old proverb and seeking mastery of something as the only course open to us.

This life of concentration (not to be confused with the life of contemplation) is probably, as I say, a kind of response to the knowledge explosion. Yet to live such a life in the presence of the knowledge explosion seems somehow disturbingly paradoxical. For the knowledge explosion is not a mere violent multiplication of facts or even ideas; it is not simply a vast increase in the magnitude of information. With it has come a novel awareness of the immensely complicated but often close relationships between the kinds of things there are to be known. And when the nature of some of these relationships is sensed, intellectual isolation not only becomes a mistake, it becomes a contradiction in terms. For the modern conception of intellect presupposes an awareness of such relationships.

### Growth of Relationships among Disciplines

When we see this, some of the paradox begins to resolve itself. We are able to offer a tentative distinction, at any rate, between the "specialist" and the "narrow specialist." The distinction between them becomes plainer if we look at the campuses of the great universities in our country. Here many men are pursuing inquiries that are infinitely more specialized, or at least more highly sophisticated, than those of even fifteen years ago. Yet the names given to the "professional fields" of these men—to the very departments and administrative units which pay their salaries—suggest how diversified are the disciplines which merge to form these new specialties. On my own campus there is a Department of Mathematical Biology, a Department of Geophysics (and no longer one of geology), a Committee on Medieval Studies (embracing history and arts and letters and philosophy and even science); there is a Committee on Social Thought and one on Ideas and Methods; there is a Committee on General Studies in the Humanities where students pursue problems which are sharply defined and highly "special," but which—it is insisted— must involve the interplay of two, and preferably more, of the major arts.

These things are going on not merely because it is fashionable or friendly or logistically profitable to engage in "interdisciplinary" enterprises. They go on precisely because, as knowledge has exploded, it has become clear that knowledge cannot docilely conform to the neat categories of college catalogs and tables of academic organization. For what

we have learned is not simply the relationships between disciplines, but between the Facts of Life—between the elements of human personality, between people themselves, between units of society, between areas of the universe, between space and time—and hence between all the questions to be asked about all these things.

It would be strange if the study of literature remained unaffected by these discoveries. That great, slow-growing arsenal of thought and imagination which we call literature has always been a major depository of the Facts of Life—however shaped, generalized, fantasied upon these facts may be. It would be strange if, as twentieth-century men, we looked at these facts in their literary setting without awareness of the twentieth-century relations they invite us to discern, the twentieth-century questions they are capable of raising. Literary scholarship, teaching, study carried out without regard to what is going on in the entire community of knowledge does violence not only to that community but to the nature of literature itself.

The modern writer who writes a complex biography in deliberate or inadvertent ignorance of Freud is in no more laudable position than the modern metaphysician who writes in comparable ignorance of Einstein. The English teacher who teaches *Gulliver's Travels* in sublime indifference to her students' preoccupation with outer space is similarly culpable. The critic who, in adherence to the entirely noble and intelligent principle of art for art's sake, totally denies the merit of employing art for the sake of something else as well, belies his humane calling.

### Challenge of New Human Problems

And this brings me to a final point. I have already observed that the explosion of knowledge has been accompanied by an explosion of problems—or if you will, the emergence of a complex of new problems, each of which is violently explosive. I do not believe that, as humanists, we can remain morally indifferent to these problems. As English teachers, we—and I mean every single one of us—are professionally committed to some encounter with these problems.

You know of these problems—many of you far better than I do. I know that in my own city there are thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands, of culturally deprived urban youngsters. Can any English teacher regard as irrelevant the staggering job of cultivating even minimal literacy in children to whom such words as "bedtime" and "father" and even "breakfast" have virtually no meaning whatever? And, in the antiseptic high schools of the city and suburbs, the archaic little academies of the

small towns, and the burgeoning factory-like colleges and junior colleges and universities, too, there is that other kind of depressing cultural deprivation—the scores of flabby, incurious minds, whose only pleasures are transient and superficial, or worse, and who, whether in apathy or truculence, reject that greatest of invitations, the invitation to learn.

In the face of these, and scores of similar problems, the products and principles of the revolution I have been describing seem frail and remote. Yet this is not the moment to forget the revolution, for it has taught us many things. It has taught us to distinguish between the genuine encounter with art and evasive moseyings about the fringes of art. It has taught us that the critical mind can and does declare itself firmly, defend itself responsibly and systematically. It has taught us that a work of literary art, whatever else it may be, *is* a work of art—by which I don't mean anything fancy or mysterious but that we have come to see that a poem or play is a *made* thing, in which the choices and shapings and arrangings and limitings of the maker can be observed and reflected upon and judged.

It is precisely because we have learned these things—and will not forget them—that we are in a stronger position than ever before to view literature in its reciprocal relations with all other knowledge. Today we should be able to consider literature, as it both reflects and affects society, without turning ourselves into sociologists. We should be able to employ new psychological insights in literary pursuits without danger of being mistaken for clinicians. We should be able boldly to raise that once heretical question, "What are the uses of literature?" without committing ourselves to the dogma that to be good a work of art must necessarily be practically useful.

We should be able to do these things—and there are signs of our willingness to try them. In journals, here and abroad, the critical revolution is already being treated as past history. More important, in journals and papers and informal talk, there are signs that we are willing to yield some of our special identity in the excitement and the urgency of the problem explosion. Most important, in meetings such as this, and many like it, we are engaged in a community of discourse which has been born of common concern, common curiosity. Specialists though we may remain, we are willing to take off our labels in the presence of challenges we all feel with equal urgency. In meeting those challenges, we must draw on resources from any province in which they can be found, if they hold promise of usefulness.

### Reemphasis on Need for Study of Literature

If we literature teachers forget, to some extent, our traditional identity—the security of position, mode of thought, special concentration—we do no disservice to literature. A man usually teaches literature, after all, not because he believes this or that to be the proper way of reading or teaching, but because he himself derives deep satisfaction in reading, a satisfaction he wants to share with others. Or if you prefer some higher moral reason for teaching literature—the communication, say, of what is noblest and wisest in our collective experience, the case is all the stronger.

If we believe that there are great goods in literature—whether we call them instruction or delight or both or something else—then, in a democratic world, we must believe that these goods are to be shared as widely as possible. And if, in a democratic but wildly changing and troubled world, this calls for understanding of and concern for many things besides literature, then, by all means, let whatever we know and believe in be brought to bear on the business of sharing. Some of you may feel that this is a vague and vulnerable argument. You may feel that engagement in literature is a kind of laudable luxury, today inaccessible to many of our fellow-citizens, which must yield priority to more crucial products of the knowledge explosion if we are to survive at all. You may point out, persuasively, that serious imaginative literature is, in the modern world, the possession of an élite, a dedicated circle of its custodians and beneficiaries. You may point out that literature is not every man's dish of tea—or every man's bread and butter; and that individuals have lived without it and been none the worse.

To reply that man does not live by bread alone is too easy. Man can indeed *live* by bread alone, certainly if it is the vitamin-enriched bread of this happy age. My only response to such a view is that it sets our sights for satisfaction and growth very low—that it suggests that, even while knowledge expands, man's promise of power and wholeness, if not of perfection, must dwindle. And to this depressing view, I think I would offer a reply which is not of my own devising. It was made, in the first half of the nineteenth century, by Alexis de Tocqueville, that brilliant French observer of American life, whose assessment of our nation and its problems and its promise was nothing if not realistic. Here is what de Tocqueville has to say—and, as I end with these words of his, I hope

you can understand their relevance, if not to my remarks then to our time:

In proportion as castes disappear and the classes of society draw together, as manners, customs, and laws vary, because of the tumultuous intercourse of men, as new facts arise, as new truths are brought to light, as ancient opinions are dissipated and others take their place, the image of the ideal but always fugitive perfection presents itself to the human mind. Continual changes are then every instant occurring under the observation of every man; the position of some is rendered worse, and he learns but too well that no people and no individual, however enlightened they may be, can lay claim to infallibility; the condition of others is improved, whence he infers that man is endowed with an indefinite faculty for improvement. His reverses teach him that none have discovered absolute good; his success stimulates him to the never ending pursuit of it. Thus, forever seeking, forever falling to rise again, often disappointed, but not discouraged, he tends unceasingly toward that unmeasured greatness so indistinctly visible at the end of the long track which humanity has yet to tread.[2]

### Notes

[1] M. H. Abrams, "Five Types of Lycidas" in C. A. Patrides (ed.), *Milton's Lycidas: The Tradition and the Poem* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, Inc., 1961), p. 22.
[2] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, tr. Henry Reeve, ed. Francis Brown, rev. ed. by Phillips Bradley (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945), II, p. 34.

# The Study of Language

# The Study of Language

$\mathcal{T}$he study of language in the elementary school is already being reshaped in many ways. The scope and function of oral language experiences for young children are being freshly examined in the light of new knowledge about the language "competence" children bring with them to school. The questions raised about nonstandard English and about dialect study in general are leading to a variety of proposals that require testing. New bases for explaining the syntax and structure of English have led to proposals that the study of grammar, that is to say, the conscious attention to the nature of language, may not be irrelevant to the child's growth in the power to use language—as we may have concluded from our experience with the old grammar.

Unless elementary teachers are to accept at face value new proposals and new study materials in the area of language study, they must know more about language than most have had a chance to learn thus far. At present, most teachers are aware that research has revealed something new about children's knowledge and use of language. However, the contributions of dialectology are just beginning to be assayed. The dialecticians themselves are still exploring the dimensions of our regional dialects; at the same time, sensing the socioeconomic implications of the dialect problem, these scholars are speeding up their efforts to share what they know with us.

As for the new grammar, the rapidity with which schools of grammar develop and divide might support the idea that trying to study what they have to offer is next to impossible. Despite the proliferation of schools and the tendency of proponents of one to try to put down adherents of the others, what we have been able to learn from them all is exciting enough to stimulate us to try to keep up with changing emphases and ideas and thereby, we trust, to become more effective in our own work with the language development of children.

It is against this background of a need to know that we may turn to the contributions of the seven papers in this section, half the total number here presented. The papers vary in length and density of detail; moreover, they deal with greatly different aspects of language study.

At the general level are the papers of Professors Strickland and Thomas. The former provides a summary of some of the new knowledge, to which Miss Strickland herself has contributed, and raises questions

about the programs being newly proposed to teach children directly the new grammar. Professor Thomas distinguishes between language competence, defined as the "internalized knowledge which every native speaker has" of how his language works, and performance, which is "what an individual does with his competence in a particular situation."

Two papers deal directly with dialect study. Professor McDavid provides an overview of the area and also defines new approaches to differences in language; from his paper we learn about proxemics, haptics, kinesics, and paralanguage as well as about the range of dimensions in usage. Professor Labov reports in detail the results of his studies of Negro dialect in New York City and speculates on the significance of the findings for the teaching of reading.

Two other papers, Professor Gough's and the paper of Professor Hunt, "How Little Sentences Grow to Big Ones," form an excellent base for understanding the nature of generative-transformational grammar. Professor Gough presents a closely argued case to prove that language acquisition calls into play and requires the "knowledge of grammaticality," not merely the use of imitation; in the course of his argument, he presents the essence of generative-transformational grammar. Professor Hunt develops his presentation around exercises in sentence-combining or consolidation.

The remaining paper deals with another aspect of language study. Professor Tyler's, which might also have appeared with the papers on the study of literature, provides us with a case example, brilliantly executed, of what the analysis of "the way a poet understands and uses language" may do to "help in appreciating the way a linguist understands and analyzes language." This paper appears in the language section because it is a thorough application of the new grammar theories to the language of literature.

Mining these papers for insights to apply to programs of language study in the elementary school will not be easy. While several of the papers propose applications in their final pages, the proposals assume a thorough understanding of the rationale presented for them. Most of the papers require and all deserve close study by their readers.

The questions raised by the new knowledge about language are many. What does the possession of language "competence" by young children indicate for us as we review the conventions of our present language arts program? What are the possible positions that can be defined in

relationship to the dialect problem: shall we work to replace some dialect systems or to modify them—or add standard English as a kind of second language? What should we do, if anything, to promote growth in syntactic maturity? Dare we teach more grammar—and if we decide to do so, to whom and when shall we teach it?

Undoubtedly these papers will help in framing and sharpening such questions. Finding the answers or finding a variety of answers that will deserve comparison is a task to which a great deal of professional attention is already being given and one to which more of our energies must go. We seem to stand on the threshold of understandings that may enable us to build a genuinely new program of language development for children.

# 6

## What Children Need to Know about Language

### Ruth G. Strickland

*I* must call attention in my first sentence to the fact that I speak, not as a linguist, but as an elementary teacher. I am eager that children learn to respect the English language, to use it with profit to themselves and without harm to the language, and that they learn to read with understanding and appreciation the literature written in this language.

Children come to school knowing their language. They have learned its sound patterns by the age of four and its grammatical structure by six or seven. They have acquired a vocabulary of some sort, the size and quality of it determined not by their intelligence but by their life experience. Regardless of what we do or do not do to them in school, they will go on learning. In spite of all that we say and do, the child is, in the last analysis, the master of his own learning.

### Basic Facts about Language

Children can and should learn a number of basic facts about language which we have typically not taught them or have taught so indirectly that they have gone unrecognized. These are facts which will add materially to their interest in language in general and their own language in particular.

1. Language is system. Any language is composed of sounds and patterns of arrangement. Words are composed of sounds but words in isolation convey very little meaning. Meaning is communicated by words that are arranged in patterns characteristic of the language.

2. Language is arbitrary and man-made. We learn most of our language as it is handed down to us so that we can enter into and be a part of a speech community.

3. There are many languages in the world, each of which does the work it needs to do very satisfactorily for the people who use it. One language is not better than another.

4. Each language has its own system of sounds and arrangements. We ask a friend, "How are you?" A German asks, *"Wie befinden Sie sich?"* We question, "What time is it?" and a Frenchman, *"Quelle heure est-il?"*

5. A language changes with time. In the story of Robin Hood or King Arthur, the characters do not speak as we do. Theirs is English of an earlier time when custom and convention were somewhat though not altogether different.

6. Language changes as things happen to people. The earliest settlers who came to our eastern seaboard had experiences that Englishmen had never had before, and their language began to change to encompass those new experiences. They borrowed name words from the Indians and used old words in meanings.

Probably at no time in the history of English-speaking people has so much new knowledge and new experience been added so rapidly as it is being added today. We are coining new words at a prodigious rate to meet new needs and are modifying our use of old words accordingly. These new words are being made of old parts, some from Greek and Latin, some appropriated intact from other languages, and some adapted from words and patterns long in use in English. Words are changing parts of speech without changes in spelling or sound, or through the addition of new endings—"ize," "wise," and the like.

7. Old words become obsolete or are dropped entirely as they cease to be needed or as new words of greater usefulness crowd them out.

8. Each language has its own ways of conveying meaning. In English, we do it in part through our use of pitch, stress, and pauses as well as of the silent language of gesture, facial expression, and bodily stance. All of these are communicators of attitude and emotional charge.

9. Any language may be ringed about by related dialects. Not all speakers use it the same way. Communities of speakers evolve methods of their own of communicating ideas. Groups of speakers separated from one another geographically and over a period of time may modify their language in different ways, in the sounds they utter, in the words they use, and in the way they string words together in sentences. The dialects which develop may remain mutually intelligible or may, in time, become separate languages.

10. Nearly everyone uses more than one dialect. We do not use language in precisely the same way when we are reacting informally with our family as we do in public address or in a scholarly article. If one's home language differs from that of the school and the books one must

read there, if it differs from the language of people who have attained prestige and power, one can add the prestige dialect to his repertoire without feeling that the dialect he learned from the parents who bore him and who protect and care for him is to be despised and rejected. Many worthy people have lived out their lives with only what we have come to call substandard dialect. Their children, however, need in this period of our history to add the prestige dialect to the extent that they can be helped to do so, lest their home dialect close the door to vocational and social opportunity.

### Ways of Learning Language in the Classroom

All of these facts or concepts regarding language seem to me important for children to learn, not through contrived lessons and drills but in the process of dealing with language in many different ways under many different circumstances in the classroom. Teachers can call attention to such generalizations at a variety of points, so that children give them conscious attention and test their applicability in day-by-day school living.

Through talking and working together, children learn the power and the usefulness of language in human relations. In a classroom where children are not chained to textbooks and paper and pencils, they learn through experience how language is used to build friendships and to repair relationships that are damaged through careless acts or thoughtlessly used words. They can be led to look beyond the classroom to find examples of this in the political and diplomatic world. We send our emissaries to India, to the Vatican, to Vietnam to talk with other leaders to improve human understanding and relationships in both the national and the global arenas. We read in the newspapers that our representatives in the Congress dash homeward from time to time to "mend their political fences" and sound out the thinking of the people whom they represent. Not only in the classroom is language used to make decisions regarding individuals and groups: we discover that this is common procedure in legislative halls and courtrooms. Children use language in school to make plans, as do the family, club, fraternal, and civic groups.

It is partly because I want all children to make a good beginning in learning these things that I am opposed to setting kindergarten children, particularly kindergarten children but other children as well, to the task of filling in blanks in reading and arithmetic workbooks when the learning that may be achieved through this means could be achieved faster and in most instances more thoroughly at another time and through kinds

of work which permit oral interaction. There is other, far more important work for kindergarten children to do, work that involves language development which many of them need above all else if they are to succeed in school.

We need to take time over and over again to look with children at the role of language in the world as well as in the classroom. We read of riots in India over problems of language. We take note of the struggles of newly emerging nations to weld a community of feeling, thinking, and acting with people who speak a wide variety of languages and dialects. We can give attention to these facts and then return to our task of finding ways to help children learn to discipline their thinking, listening, and speaking so that their use of oral language is constantly extended and improved.

There are endless opportunities in the teaching of the social studies to call attention to the influence of language on history. Do we remember when we teach about the settlement of Jamestown and of Plymouth to call attention to the fact that these first settlers brought with them the English language of their time? Their language began to change immediately as they encountered new experiences and new things and needed to talk about them. The early Dutch settlers of New Amsterdam left their imprint on the language, as did the French and later the Germans and people from other European countries. The westward movement left its imprints on American English as has everything that has happened since to a vital, virile people. Language has played a major role in the lives of all men and all nations. Children should be made aware of this, whether they are studying their own community as is commonly done in the earliest school years, their state or region, the United States as a whole, or any geographic region of the world or any period of man's history.

## Scholarly Contributions to Language Study

Let me turn next to another quite different facet of our problem and responsibility as we teach children about language. Throughout most of my long lifetime of teaching, we "educationists" have had our realm rather largely to ourselves. To be sure, critics have arisen from time to time to tell us what we were doing badly and what we ought to do, but they have left the doing largely to us. A recent and very significant development in education is the interest scholars in many disciplines are taking in the work that we do. This is good. We know that many things need to be done better in the schools. We know that we are generalists

in a sense, and do not know as much about each separate realm of knowledge as we would like to. We need the help of the scholars and are grateful for it.

Many scholars have recently turned their attention to language around the world, including English. During the last few years, we teachers have been whirled through at least two major revisions of our thinking with regard to English grammar. After living comfortably for most of our lives with a traditional grammar that had little influence on our own use of language, a bare few years ago we studied and accepted as best we could what scholar-innovators called structural grammar. It was put into textbooks for the junior and senior high schools, and young people who had lived through four or more years of the old grammar in the elementary school were asked to change gears and think in terms of certain new interpretations of structure together with new terminology and new meanings for some of their old terminology. Much of what the structural grammarians offered made the kind of sense that elementary teachers could accept in the light of their experience with language and with children. They were able to select what they could use and adapt it to children.

Now our attention has been turned to a newer and still more logical and promising interpretation of the structure of English, the generative-transformational. Very few teachers have had opportunity to learn it because very few college English departments offer them any opportunity to do so. This is as true of students now in training for teaching as it is of established practitioners in the classroom. I do not know to what extent the new language materials being offered us for use with children are the product of sound scholarship in both linguistics and in the psychology of learning. They appear to have sprung, full-grown, from their sources as did Athena from the forehead of Zeus, perhaps with a little of the flavor of opportunism thrown in. It is impossible to be convinced that children now need to learn everything the scholars have learned about language, much of it within the last decade, and that they need to learn all of it between the ages of eight and fourteen. Admittedly, none of this has been tested with children, yet vigorous publicity is being applied to gain wide acceptance in school systems. Since all of the available research indicates that the academic work done with the old grammar affected very little either children's speech or their writing, it would seem wise to test such new materials in pilot studies in many classrooms with many types of children before accepting them for general use.

### Need for Careful Field Testing

Children learn best when they understand the significance of what they are learning, when it means something to them, and when they care about it. I cannot agree with an author who says he is not concerned with children's attitude toward what they learn. He does not care, he says, whether they like what he has laid out for them to study of poetry or language. He is determined that they must be ground consistently through the mill he has contrived in order that they may be able to write their language. Much of what we do have in research would seem to refute that contention.

Years of experience with the teaching of children make me very much concerned about the way children feel about what they are required to do in school. I see no virtue in teaching children to read by methods which cause them to shun reading forever afterward. I see no value in children's learning to "understand" certain selected and often inappropriate poems if thereafter they never read any poem they are not required to read. I see no value in endless rules for phonology and syntax if a child's dialect remains such that it cuts him off from a life in which there is any need for writing.

A good deal of what the proponents of transformational grammar are suggesting has value for the elementary schools if it is taught so that it actually helps children to use their language with greater power and accuracy. Children enjoy playing with language, trying words in new combinations, and testing their own power to gain the reactions they seek through language. Using Chomsky's four basic sentence kernels, the four kinds of English sentences, children would learn a great deal through putting many sorts of fillers in each slot. Basic sentence patterns are built about four kinds of verbs:

Transitive—John ate the cake.
Intransitive—We walked home.
Copulative—It smells sweet.
A form of *be*—This is mine.

Research by Loban in California, Hunt in Florida, and our own research on children's language at Indiana University all indicate that the best measure of maturity in a child's language is his ability to expand and elaborate sentences. A scheme which appeals to them and which helps them learn how to build and expand sentences is that of reducing a sentence to its fixed core and adding to it in terms of what, when, where, why, and how as one has need in producing a sentence to serve his pur-

poses. For example, the core, "Mother baked" can be expanded to "Yesterday, because it was Tommy's birthday, my mother baked a beautiful birthday cake to serve for dessert at dinner." As children manipulate sentences through modifying a kernel sentence or expanding a basic core, the terminology of grammar can be learned functionally. Verb, adjective, subject, predicate, noun phrase, verb phrase are all terms which can become meaningful through use without abstraction and without contrived pencil-and-paper drill.

It is important that children learn the structure of their language. The old grammar has been demonstrably unsuccessful in bringing about improvement in speech and writing. The linguists who have served as consultants for our research at Indiana University have attributed it to the fact that we have made grammar harder for children than it needs to be and that it has been taught abstractly rather than functionally. Any approach to the new grammar which commits the same errors on an even greater scale can scarcely be accepted without proof of its effectiveness gained through many pilot studies. Spelling, as well as grammar, can be improved through the help of the linguists, but I cannot, without evidence which is not now available, subject children to the work with phonology now being proposed by some enthusiasts.

### Common Sense Guidelines

Help with *usage* is the major need for many of the children in our schools, and we cannot afford to forget this aspect of our work for even a moment. This is best done orally through day-by-day attention and application to the individual needs of each child. No textbook can determine what and how we shall teach since the dialects of families and localities differ greatly. No plan for teaching language which omits this element can possibly meet our national needs.

There is much for children to learn about language which will add greatly to their motivation for language improvement as well as to their understanding of language itself. Those of us who are giving the matter intensive study are enthusiastic about its possibilities. All of us need to study intensively what the scholars have to tell us about language because our own education gave us little of this and we are aware that we need it. We are obligated to give careful attention to what some of them are suggesting that we teach to children. There we must select what we believe to be good for children and test it thoroughly and make the adaptations we feel are essential before we adopt it wholesale. In the realm of what is suitable and feasible for children, we must be the experts.

# 7

## Competence and Performance in Language

### Owen Thomas

The two terms in the title of this paper have great relevance and importance for teachers of the English language arts in the elementary schools. I would like to lead up to a definition of these terms gradually.

Consider, first, four six-year-old boys from different parts of the country and from different social backgrounds. It is an amazing and awesome fact that, if these four boys should meet, they could communicate with each other. Moreover, we can communicate with them. And to compound the amazement, each one of these boys, like any native speaker of English from the age of three—or thereabouts—onward, has the ability to produce and to understand an infinite number of sentences.

The only way to explain this almost incredible situation is to say that these four boys—as well as you and I—speak the same language; that is, for all practical purposes, we all use the same grammar (with minor dialectal and educational differences) in speaking and in understanding the language. If this were not true, the children could not understand each other, and we could not understand them.

### What Language Is: A Definition

What, then, is language, and how do people learn languages?

The first of these questions is the easier of the two, but even in trying to formulate an answer to it we need to make a digression. Specifically, we need to look at "symbolic logic," which is, of course, that branch of philosophy that has had the greatest impact on academic research in the twentieth century.

Symbolic logic enables us to discuss the various systems that exist in the world. The so-called "new math," for example, is the product of applying logic to the teaching of mathematics. As all teachers in elementary schools know, the notion of "set theory" is important in the new math. We can say that a set is simply a collection of anything. The

number of letters in the alphabet constitutes a set. Moreover, a set may contain only one thing, like the set of Mt. Rushmores in the world, or it may contain an infinite number of things, like the set of all the possible positive integers in arithmetic.

In discussing language, we are concerned with three kinds of sets: a set of elements, a set of operations, and a set of laws that govern the operations. The set of elements, of course, includes the sounds of the language, the standard prefixes and suffixes, the complete list of words in an unabridged dictionary, and so on. The number of such elements is finite; that is, we can count all the sounds necessary to speak English, all the words in a dictionary, and so on.

The set of operations is a bit more difficult to discuss. Let's take a simple sentence as a source of examples: "The boy ate the hamburger." Suppose, now, that I ask you to perform the following operations on this simple sentence: (1) change it into a question which can be answered by a "yes" or a "no," (2) make the sentence—which is now positive— negative, and (3) change the sentence from the active to the passive voice. You would probably produce the following three sentences:

1. Did the boy eat the hamburger?
2. The boy didn't eat the hamburger.
3. The hamburger was eaten by the boy.

The fact that all native speakers of English would produce the same three sentences—or would at least recognize the three which I produced as acceptable—can be explained only if we assume that there are certain basic operations which take place in the language and which everyone learns very early. Moreover, the operations must also explain such things as the occurrence of "did" in the first and second sentences. (There is no "did" in the original sentence.)

In short, every language has a set of operations which permit us to combine the elements of the language in various acceptable ways. Furthermore, this set of operations must be finite, or it would be impossible for speakers to learn the set.

But there are also laws that restrict the kinds of operations possible in a language. Consider the following three words: *brick, blick, bnick.* The first one is obviously an English word; the second could become an English word (it might be the name of a new detergent); but the third could never be an English word. All native speakers recognize these facts: they are part of the laws of the English language, or more specifically, of the sound system of the English language.

Now returning to our earlier question "What is a language?" we can place our definition within the context of symbolic logic. In particular, I would like to offer a definition that is adapted from one originally formulated by Noam Chomsky:

> A language consists of a set of sentences, formulated from a set of elements, according to a set of operations, that obey a set of laws.

The number of sentences is infinite. The set of elements, the set of operations, and the set of laws are all finite.

## The Concept of Language Competence

Now we can define a grammar. Specifically, a grammar consists of the sets of elements, operations, and laws that a speaker uses in producing and understanding sentences. When we learn to speak a language, we must, in some fashion, learn the grammar of that language.

But how do we learn? More particularly, how do the four boys that I mentioned earlier all learn what is fundamentally the same grammar? Unfortunately, nobody knows precisely how children learn language, although there are many scholars, particularly in the field of psychology, who are currently studying the problem. But we do know that by the time a child gets to school, he has somehow learned a grammar of English that enables him to speak and to understand sentences, including a great number of perfectly grammatical sentences that have never been spoken or written before. Technically, this internalized knowledge which every native speaker has, this awesome ability which enables even children to speak and to understand grammatical sentences, is called "competence."

But even though we can give a name to this ability, we can not define it precisely. There is no way to open up the head of a child and to point to his competence. We can not define it with absolute precision. We cannot dissect it.

What, then, can we do? For the moment, at least, we can turn back to the notion of system. More specifically, we can construct a "grammatical model" that duplicates the effect of an individual's competence; that is, we can use the model to produce sentences.

More accurately, a "model" is a logical attempt to explain a system and, more specifically, how the system works. And there can be many models that explain the same system. In astronomy, for example, we can "explain" the movement of the planets through the use of the ancient Greek ("Ptolemaic") system in which the sun goes around the earth or through the use of the modern ("Copernican") system in which the planets go

around the sun. In a very real sense, both models "work" since either model can be used to predict the exact position of the sun or the planets (relative to the earth) on any given day. Obviously, the modern system "works better"; that is, it is a more accurate explanation of what we call reality. And as we learn more facts about reality, we are better able to formulate explanations, "models," of that reality.

All grammars, then, are models of the reality of language. And as you might suspect, some models are "better"—more accurate, more useful, more complete—than others. Traditional grammar is a model and a useful one. It contains many accurate explanations of linguistic reality. Structural linguistics is also a model, and as such, it tells us many interesting and important things about language. But only one grammar, the transformational, specifically attempts to define all the elements, all the operations, and all the laws of a language. In other words, a transformational grammar is a model of an ideal speaker's competence, the closest thing we have to an actual definition of competence itself.

The notion of competence is an extremely useful one. Professor Kellogg Hunt, of Florida State University, has used the notion to establish the fact that children in various grades generally "know" most of the same operations. The primary difference between younger and older children consists of the fact that older children can perform *more* operations in a given sentence. Young children, for example, can construct negative sentences, or interrogative sentences, or sentences in the passive voice, but only rarely can they construct a negative-interrogative-passive ("Wasn't the hamburger eaten by the boy?"). In other words, young children have a far greater competence than we've generally given them credit for having. But they obviously need more practice in using this competence.

### Performance: What One Does with His Competence

What, then, is performance? By now, the definition should be obvious. Performance is what an individual does with his competence in a particular situation. And performance can be affected by a number of totally nonlinguistic factors; for example, if a person is tired, or embarrassed, or in a hurry, his linguistic performance might well be affected although his linguistic competence would remain unchanged. I am sure we have all had the experience of someone saying to us, "Oh, you're an English teacher. I'll have to watch my grammar." Such persons are embarrassed and, for this reason alone, will occasionally make mistakes in performance,

mistakes which they might not make under other circumstances. Or take a more personal case: have you ever been embarrassed when you had to address a group of teachers? Have you ever made any "grammatical mistakes" that you would otherwise never make? My guess is that we all have. And other teachers find it amusing. But few teachers will doubt our competence; they are amused, rather, by our performance.

In short, the distinction between competence and performance is an important one. Our competence is our grammar. Our performance is our use of the grammar.

All this is not to say that we should ignore the discussion of language in the schools. Far from it. It seems probable that we can increase the size of a child's performance significantly, and we can certainly give him greater facility in the use of this competence. This is precisely the point. In teaching the English language arts in the elementary school, we should first attempt to show a child how much he already knows about language—we should make him aware of his competence. Then, and only then, are we ready to go on to improve his performance.

# 8

## The Limitations of Imitation: The Problem of Language Acquisition

### Philip B. Gough

The child must be taught many things in school, but before he gets there he has learned something without which he could scarcely be taught anything at all; he has learned his native language. This fact is so commonplace that it has failed to excite our wonder, in part because we have thought we understood if not in detail, at least in outline, the way in which language is acquired. But recent work in psycholinguistics suggests that language is not learned in the way we have supposed, that the child's feat is far more wonderful than we have imagined.

In this paper, I hope to illustrate this work by showing how it casts doubt on what I take to be the traditional and prevailing view of language acquisition, that language is learned largely through imitation. In this view, the child tries to mimic his parents' speech. If he is successful, he is reinforced; if he errs, he is corrected. Once he has mastered certain forms, he will generalize what he has learned to create novel utterances, he will extend what he knows by analogy.

If one means by *imitation* simply that the child learns the language of his parents, then we cannot doubt that the child learns through imitation, for that is a fact. If they speak English, then so will he. But *imitation* is typically not used simply to describe this fact; it is used to explain it, to describe a process by which the child comes to speak like his parents. In this usage, the meaning of imitation is vague, but it clearly suggests a humble, mechanical process, one devoid of complex mental or intellectual activity, so that, in the extreme, the child is seen to resemble a parrot, or a kind of biological tape recorder, storing parental utterances for use at an appropriate moment.

It is this latter view of imitation I wish to challenge, for I hope to show that whatever the process of language acquisition, its accomplishment demands a high order of cognitive activity on the part of the child.

There are two ways to evaluate an hypothesis about the way something is learned. One is to observe how the learning develops, to see if it proceeds as it should; the other is to examine the final achievement, the product of learning, to see if it could have been learned in that way. Both of these tests can be applied to imitation as an hypothesis about language learning. Let us begin by examining the course of language learning.[1]

## The Course of Language Learning

Sometime around his second birthday, a child begins to sound like a man. Prior to this, he has mastered, to a reasonable degree of approximation, the phonology of his language, and he has acquired a workable vocabulary. But he has been limited to single-word utterances. Now he takes an important step toward linguistic adulthood; he begins to utter sentences.

The child's earliest sentences are not adult sentences. When we hear "Ride horsie" or "Want apple" or "White sweater on," we know that we are not listening to an adult. We should also recognize that we are not listening to an accurate imitation of adult speech, for these sentences are not good English. If the small child is a tape recorder, he is a faulty one, for he seldom produces a faithful reproduction of an adult sentence.

The metaphor of a faulty tape recorder holds, however. The child's productions do not appear to be random combinations of words; they look like recordings of adult sentences in which some words and word endings have been skipped, for we can add a word or affix here and there to the child's utterances and get good sentences like "I want to ride a horsie" and "I want an apple." We have little trouble in understanding the child's sentences, and we might conceive of the child as producing economical imitations of adult sentences, leaving out redundant and un-informative elements. In fact, Brown and Fraser (1964) have observed that childish sentences are similar to those produced by an adult when words cost him money; they are telegraphic. Thus we might maintain that the child's telegraphic productions are simply imitations with omission.

If this is the case, then it behooves us to explain his omissions. One possibility is that they are simply failures of memory. When we use the term *imitation*, we use it loosely, for the child seldom echoes adult speech. His imitations, if they are such, are usually not immediate; they are delayed. It seems reasonable to suppose that he simply forgets parts of the utterance he is reproducing, and the result is "telegraphese."

If the child's telegraphic sentences are poorly remembered imitations,

we would expect his direct and immediate imitations to be accurate. The child occasionally does produce immediate imitations, and, in fact, we can ask him to. Brown and Fraser (1964) have asked two- and three-year-old children to repeat sentences like "I showed you the book" and "I will not do that again." The children reply with sentences like "I show book" and "Do again." Their accuracy increases with age, but at any age, these solicited and direct imitations do not significantly differ, in length or complexity, from the child's spontaneous utterances.

Evidently the child's reductions of adult sentences cannot be blamed on failures of memory, for the child similarly reduces sentences he has just heard. If they are imitations, they are limited imitations. Those limitations decrease with age. But the decrease is not achieved through imitation, for the child's imitations do not seem to differ from his spontaneous productions (Ervin, 1964). We must look for another explanation of the increasing length and complexity of childish utterances, and this is a first reason for doubting the adequacy of imitation.

No one supposes that the child is purely imitative, for we are certain that he creates novel utterances. If many of the child's utterances seem to be telegraphic versions of adult sentences, many do not. When the child says "All gone outside" or "more page" or "there high," it is hard to imagine adult models for his utterances. Moreover, when the offspring of college graduates uses word forms like "comed" and "breaked" and "foots" and "sheeps" (those familiar errors commonly attributed to "regularization" of irregular nouns and verbs), it is not likely that he is repeating forms he has heard.

The usual explanation of such productions is that they are generalizations, extensions by analogy. This is a vague and unsatisfactory explanation, for there are any number of analogies which might be extended but are not, any number of generalizations the child might make but does not; and it would seem that an adequate explanation would predict which analogies or generalizations would occur, and why. But we might ignore this problem and assume that novel utterances are produced by generalization, to see where this assumption leads us.

The notion that novel utterances of this sort are generalizations implies that the child has a basis for generalizations; the idea of extension by analogy requires that the child know something to extend. In the case of the regularization of word endings for example, as in the plural of nouns or the past tense of verbs, we should expect to find the child forming regular plurals (boy-boys) and past tenses (walk-walked) before he extends these endings to the irregular nouns and verbs.

Ervin (1964) has found that the development of the plural noun proceeds in just this way. The appearance of regular plurals in the child's speech precedes by some weeks the first appearance of a regularized irregular; the child says "blocks" and "toys" and "dogs" considerably before he says "foots" or "sheeps" or "mans."

But Ervin has also found that the development of the past tense does not proceed in this way. Instead, the first past tenses used are the correct forms of the irregular verbs, forms like "came" and "went" and "broke." This is probably not surprising, for these are among the most frequently used forms in adult speech, and we might well expect the child to imitate them correctly. But the interesting and important fact is that when the child first learns to use the past tense of a very few regular forms, like "walked" and "watched," the correct irregulars disappear, to be replaced by incorrect over-generalizations. That is, despite the fact that the child has correctly imitated and practiced the correct past tense of these forms, and has presumably been reinforced for his usage, the forms disappear with the appearance of the regular tense system.

### Generalization and Extension of Basic Processes

This fact is intriguing, for it suggests that when the child produces novel utterances, novel forms, he is not generalizing or extending some pattern which has been gradually accumulating in mechanically imitated forms. It suggests that extension by analogy and generalization are not secondary processes, operating on a basis of practiced and reinforced imitations. It suggests instead that generalization and extension are themselves basic, that the child does not record particular adult utterances but registers their pattern.

In fact, we should have reached this conclusion earlier. The assumption that the child produces some · · erances through imitation and others through generalization leaves us ı an uncomfortable position, for ultimately we must be forced to distinguish between them. We must assume that some of his utterances like "comed" and "foots" are generalizations, and not imitations, for we are confident that he has not heard these forms. But this should surely make us wonder whether many of his correct productions, like "walked" and "boys," are not generalization, too. And if any of the child's utterances might be generalizations, we might even wonder if they all are. Instead of assuming that the child says familiar things in imitation, and novel things through imitation and generalization, we might speculate that the child creates all that he says through a kind of "generalization"; that he internalizes the pattern, the rules, of

his language, and uses that pattern or those rules to create each of his utterances.

Thus a second reason for doubting the adequacy of the imitation hypothesis is that it does not correctly predict the appearance of novel utterances in the course of development; moreover, it forces us to impose what seems to be an arbitrary classification on the productions of a child.

So far we have been looking at what the child says. We have tacitly assumed that the acquisition of language is the acquisition of language production. But there is a familiar observation which shows that this is a false assumption. The child not only learns to speak; he also learns to listen. And most observers (cf. McCarthy, 1954) claim that the child learns to listen before he learns to speak, that comprehension precedes production.

We all know many more words than we use, and we hear more sentences than we utter. (We must, for we hear all those we utter, but not vice versa.) The same is true of children; moreover, most of us believe that they comprehend before they produce. A recent experiment by Fraser, Bellugi, and Brown (1963) has confirmed our beliefs.

These investigators compared three-and-a-half-year-old children's comprehension and production of ten grammatical contrasts, like the difference between the singular and plural forms of *be* (*is* vs. *are*), the singular and plural in the third person possessive pronoun (*his* or *her* vs. *their*), and the present progressive and past tenses of the verb (*is spilling* vs. *spilled*). They wrote a pair of sentences exemplifying each contrast (e.g., "The sheep are jumping" and "The sheep is jumping"), and drew a picture corresponding to each sentence (e.g., a picture of two sheep jumping over a stile and a picture of one sheep jumping while another watches).

Each child heard both sentences and saw both pictures. Then his comprehension of the contrast was measured by reading him one of the sentences and asking him to point to the correct picture; his production of the contrast was measured by pointing to one of the pictures and asking him to name it. With each contrast, comprehension exceeded production; more children pointed to the correct picture, given a sentence, than produced the contrast, given the picture.

(Of course, it might be objected that pointing at a picture is easier than uttering a sentence; this is surely true, but it does not explain the relative difficulty of the production task, for the children were able to utter the sentences, in an imitation task, more accurately than they could comprehend them.)

This result is not novel, but it does provide experimental confirmation

of our casual observation that comprehension precedes production. Some children comprehended contrasts they could not produce, but no child was able to produce a contrast which he could not comprehend. Whatever the child needs to comprehend a sentence is necessary for his production of it; the child must learn how to comprehend a sentence before he can produce it. But this fact is crucial in evaluating the imitation hypothesis, for, while the child may imitate sentences, he could not possibly imitate the comprehension of them. There are many things a parent might do to indicate that he understood a sentence, and the child could observe these things. But he cannot see or hear or feel the comprehension itself, and surely one cannot imitate something one cannot even sense. Hence a third and seemingly insurmountable difficulty for the imitation hypothesis is that it demands that the child imitate something he cannot observe.

From studies of language development we can draw, then, at least three cogent arguments against the hypothesis that language is learned through imitation. We can draw as many from studies of the product of language learning, the linguistic competence of the adult.

### Studies of Linguistic Competence

A person who knows a language knows many things that someone who does not know that language does not. For one, he can recognize the sentences of his language; he can distinguish strings of words, like "The boys will erase the blackboard," which are clearly grammatical, from strings of words, like "Blackboard erase the will boys," which are not. This is an obvious fact, but it is remarkable, for there is an infinite number of English sentences.

To see this, consider the sentence "The boys will erase the blackboard." Obviously, we may insert a phrase like "who chased the dog" after boys, and the result will be an English sentence; we might then introduce the phrase "who lived on Elm Street" after dog, and still have an English sentence. Since this process could be continued indefinitely, we must conclude that there is no longest English sentence—given any sentence whatever, we can produce a longer one by inserting another phrase. If there is no longest sentence, then there is no limit on the number of sentences, and so there is an infinity of sentences.

This is an important point, for it forces us to reject a notion closely related to the imitation hypothesis, the notion that a man recognizes sentences as grammatical because he has heard them before. This conclusion is incontrovertible from a logical point of view, but it may not

seem psychologically real. We can make the same point somewhat more concrete by considering the number of sentences of some limited length.

Consider the number of English sentences exactly 15 words long. It seems reasonable to suppose that any such sentence could start with at least 1000 different words; in fact, this estimate is highly conservative. Having begun with any of these words, it seems fair to suppose that the sentence could continue with any of 1000 different words. Then 15-word sentences can begin with any of $1000 (1000) = 1000^2$ different pairs of words, and if we extend this argument to each subsequent word in the sentence, we reach the conclusion that there are $1000^{15} = 10^{45}$ English sentences of exactly 15 words (Miller, Galanter, and Pribram, 1960). The magnitude of this number becomes apparent when we realize that the number of seconds in a century is on the order of $3.15 \times 10^9$, a tiny fraction of $10^{45}$.

The situation is not noticeably improved by considering the number of permissible sequences of word classes or parts of speech, for by similar reasoning this can be estimated at $10^9$. Thus for a person to have heard each of these sequences just once, he must hear one per second for about thirty years, without time to sleep or talk or hear sentences of other lengths. Obviously, we must reject the conclusion that the speaker of a language recognizes its sentences because he has heard them all, or even all of their patterns. We cannot assume that the speaker of a language has memorized the sentence frames or sentence patterns of his language; there are too many of them.

Thus we cannot describe a speaker's knowledge of his language, his competence, as consisting of a list of sentences or sentence patterns. Even if we could, and could use such a list as an explanation of the speaker's ability to recognize the sentences of his language, it would not be enough. A man knows more than just the permissible sequence of words which constitute those sentences; he also knows their structure. A sentence is not just a permissible sequence, of words, a list, but has a kind of hierarchical organization, and the speaker has intuitions about this organization. For example, many speakers of English recognize that "The boys will erase the blackboard" is composed of two parts, two constituents, *The boys* and *will erase the blackboard*. The latter constituent, in turn, is composed of *will erase* and *the blackboard*, and each of the two-word constituents can obviously be subdivided into two more.

Moreover, these various constituents are of various and distinct types, which the grammarian indicates by giving them labels. *The boys* and *the blackboard* are noun phrases (NP's), *will erase the blackboard* a verb

phrase (VP), and so forth. We can summarize these facts in a labeled tree diagram like this:

```
                    S
                   / \
                  /   VP
                 /   / | \
                /   /  |  \
              NP   V   |  NP
             / \  / \  |  / \
           Art  N Aux Vt Art  N
            |   |  |   |  |    |
          The boys will erase the blackboard.
```
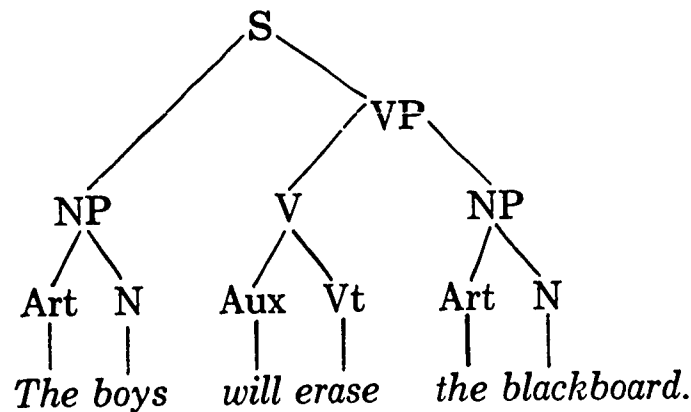
This structure is obvious to any grammarian, to any teacher of English grammar, but the important fact is that it is known to any speaker of English. To be sure, the latter's knowledge is of a different sort; it is implicit and it is often difficult for the teacher to make it, like his own, explicit. But the knowledge is there, as can be shown in several ways.

### Tests of Knowledge of Language

One is simply to point out that speakers can be taught to parse sentences. This argument may seem odd, for it seems to say that a man can learn the structure of sentences because he knows their structure. But it really does not. When we learn to parse sentences, we learn nothing new (unless the teacher wrongly describes a sentence); we learn to label things we know but have not named. To see this, notice that, unlike labels such as "red" and "dog" and "eat," grammatical terms like VP lack an ostensive referent; there is nothing in a sentence on a blackboard to which the teacher can point as the defining characteristic of some constituent like a VP. One can point to specific VP's, but one cannot point to any constant physical attribute shared by the members of this class. The myriad word combinations which constitute VP's share no observable defining characteristic; their communality, their identifying character, must reside in the mind of the speaker. Thus we conclude that the teacher of grammar simply teaches the child, or the man, explicit names for things he already knows implicitly; and that the child's ability to learn appropriate use of these names is evidence of his knowledge of the things to which they apply.

It would seem possible, also, to demonstrate the speaker's knowledge of sentence constituents and their structure experimentally. For example,

one might ask him to match parts of different sentences like NP's. Suppose we give a speaker the sentence "The boys will erase the blackboard" and the sentence "*Children who bring their lunch* may stay in the room," with a fragment of it underlined, and ask him to underline the corresponding fragment of the first sentence. Our intuitions concerning this correspondence are so strong that no psycholinguist has bothered to conduct such experiments, but they are feasible, and a man's ability to correctly identify such correspondences would provide experimental evidence of his knowledge of constituents and their structure.

Even if he failed, we could indirectly show that the NP's of these sentences form comparable units by showing him "Will the boys erase the blackboard?" and asking him to make a similar question of "Children who bring their lunch may stay in the room." We can expect the result to be "May the children who bring their lunch stay in the room?" This result would demonstrate that the speaker knows implicitly a highly abstract rule of question formation in English, in which one permutes the subject NP with the auxiliary verb. The application of this rule obviously requires that or recognize, in some sense, the equivalence of *the boys* and *the children who bring their lunch*, and *will* and *may*, the subject NP's and auxiliaries of these sentences.

These arguments are somewhat abstruse and hypothetical; we can make the same point more directly by considering how a sentence is actually understood. It is obvious that understanding a sentence requires more than understanding its words; the difference between "The boy bit the dog" and "The dog bit the boy" is a classic and cogent example of this point. It also requires a knowledge of the grammatical relations it expresses, for precisely the same sequence of word meanings may have more than one meaning.

That this is the case may be seen in the fact that the same sequence may have different meanings in different contexts, as in comparison of "In her *hope of marrying Anna was doomed to disappointment*" and "Your *hope of marrying Anna was doomed to disappointment.*" In the former, *Anna* is the subject of the verb *marry*, while in the latter *Anna* is its object. Equally telling is the fact that the same sequence may have different meanings without any context at all. For example, the sentence "The boy read a letter to his mother" is ambiguous, but this ambiguity is not explained by reference to ambiguous words in the sentence; it is due to the fact that two different structures may be imposed on it. In one, the constituent prepositional phrase *to his mother* modifies the object NP, *a letter*; in the other, the same constituent modifies the entire VP,

*read a letter.* Different structures imposed on this same sentence lead to different meanings, and this suggests, as put by George Miller (1962, p. 751), that "we cannot understand a sentence until we are able to assign a constituent structure to it." Thus even if one were to doubt that speakers of a language have knowledge about the structure of its sentences, about the constituents of those sentences and their hierarchical organization, in the form of direct linguistic intuitions about these matters, we are forced to conclude that they must have this knowledge in order to comprehend its sentences, and their knowledge is demonstrated by the fact that they do comprehend.

### Two Levels of Language Structure Known

In fact, this argument forces us to conclude that speakers of a language have knowledge of two distinct levels of structure, superficial structure and underlying structure. For notice that while many grammatical relations can be defined in terms of the constituent structure of the sentence, many cannot. For example, in the sentence, "The boy hit the girl," we may define *the boy* as the subject of the sentence (roughly because it is the first NP of the sentence) and *the girl* as the object (roughly because it is a NP which is part of the VP). But notice that in the passive version of this sentence, "The girl was hit by the boy," exactly the opposite relations obtain; *the girl* is the subject and *the boy* the object: Yet any speaker of English knows that, in fact, the relations between *boy* and *girl* and *hit* are the same in both sentences; it is the boy who did the hitting and the girl who received the blow.

Another example of this sort is provided by the sentences "John is eager to please" and "John is easy to please." In both sentences, *John* is the subject. This fact is easily characterized in terms of the constituent, superficial structures of these sentences: in both, *John* is the first and only NP. But the speaker's intuition also tells him that the sentences are not alike, for in the first, John seems to be, not only the subject of the sentence, but also the subject of the verb *please*, while in the second he is the object of that verb. That is, the first sentence seems related to a sentence like "John pleases someone," while the second is closer to a sentence like "Someone pleases John."

Evidently speakers have knowledge, not only of the hierarchical organization of the constituents of sentences, their superficial structure, but also have knowledge of another, deeper level of structure underlying this. This knowledge not only enables them to comprehend sentences by providing the basic grammatical relations they express, but also enables

them to appreciate relations between sentences. Like the speaker's knowledge of grammaticality, his knowledge of these relations could not be learned as a list, for if there is an infinite number of sentences, there is an infinite number of relations between them, and no one could learn an infinite list in a decidedly finite childhood.

We argue then that the speaker of a language has an enormous stock of knowledge of his language; he knows its sentences, their superficial and deep structures, and their interrelationships. This knowledge cannot be represented as a list or set of lists, but it can be represented as a finite set of rules, a kind of finite device which will generate or produce an infinite set of sentences and their structures and interrelationships. In fact, the description of the speaker's knowledge in this way is exactly the goal of a current linguistic theory, the theory of transformational generative grammar (Chomsky, 1957, 1965; Katz and Postal, 1964). In this theory, a grammar is not merely a pedegogical device, or a logical description of a language considered as some sort of ideal abstraction, but is instead a description of actual linguistic competence, of the knowledge possessed by speakers of a language which distinguishes them from those who do not speak it.

## Outlines of Transformational Grammar

This is not the place for a thorough presentation of this theory, for it is highly complex and technical, and several excellent introductions are easily available (Viertel, 1964; Postal, 1964; Thomas, 1965). But it is necessary to consider at least the outlines of a transformational grammar, for a number of recent psycholinguistic experiments support the claim that a transformational grammar does describe linguistic competence. If this is the case, if the product of learning a language is a transformational grammar, then we must totally reject the notion that language is learned by imitation, or, in fact, by any elementary process, and the traditional view of the child's accomplishment must be drastically revised.

A transformational grammar of some language, say English, is intended to represent the linguistic competence of its speaker. It may be thought of as a kind of sentence generating device which will produce the sentences of a language, assigning a structural description to each one in the process. The structural description is important, for it characterizes the constituents of the sentence, their hierarchical organization, and their grammatical relations at both levels of structure.

The grammar consists of three components: a syntactic component, a

phonological component, and a semantic component.

The syntactic component is basic. It consists of two parts, two sets of rules, phrase structure rules and transformational rules. The phrase structure rules are rewriting rules, rules of the form A → B, where the arrow is an instruction to rewrite A as B. Such rules are rules of formation, for they tell us to form a sentence.

For example, a trivial set of rules might be this:

$$S → NP + VP$$
$$NP → Art + N$$
$$VP → V + NP$$
$$Art → a, \text{ the}$$
$$N → boy, \text{ girl}$$
$$V → hit, \text{ kicked}$$

These rules tell us how to derive sentences like "A boy hit the girl," "The girl kicked a girl," and so forth. We begin with the symbol S (sentence). Applying the first rule, we rewrite S as $NP + VP$. Then we apply the second rule, rewriting NP as $Art + N$ to give us $Art + N + VP$. Next we use the third rule to rewrite VP, giving us $Art + N + V + NP$, and if we continue to apply the appropriate rules we will arrive at a sequence like $A + boy + hit + the + girl$.

The application of these phrase structure rules to derive a sentence automatically gives the sentence a structural description, called a base phrase-marker; we can represent it as a tree diagram of the familiar sort. For instance, the previous example would assign this phrase-marker to "A boy hit the girl":



*The boy hit the girl*
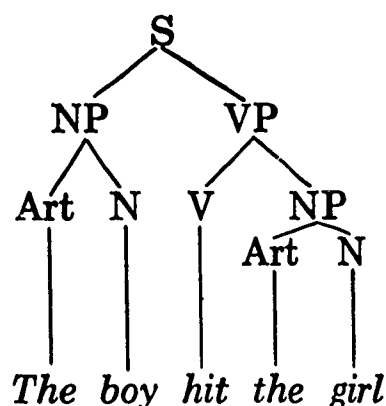
As we have seen, phrase-markers of this sort describe the structure of sentences and also indicate the basic grammatical relations of the sentence; in fact, base phrase-markers constitute the deep structure of sentences, and every sentence has a base phrase-marker or a sequence of

base phrase-markers underlying it. The phrase structure rules thus generate the deep structures of sentences. We have argued that it is the deep structures of sentences, and the grammatical relations defined therein, which determine their meanings. A transformational grammar formally expresses this assumption by stating that the semantic component of the grammar assigns to the deep structure a semantic interpretation, a meaning.

The phrase structure rules, the rules of formation, generate deep structures. But these are not sentences; they underlie sentences. The rules for *trans*formation, the transformational rules, operate to produce a sentence, with its surface structure, from its deep structure.

### Use of Common Deep Structure

In fact, the transformational rules permit us to create a variety of sentences and surface structures from a common deep structure.[2] For example, from deep structures like that underlying the sentence "The boy hit the girl" we may derive other sentences, like the passive "The girl was hit by the boy" and questions like "Did the boy hit the girl?" and "Who hit the girl?" We may also derive relative clauses and nominalizations like "the boy who hit the girl" and "the boy's hitting the girl," which may be embedded in other sentences. Thus transformations, like passivization and relativization and nominalization and the rest, serve to create the wonderful variety of surface structures, of sentences, from a relatively small set of basic structures, through deep structures.

The transformational rules apply to base phrase-markers, deleting, adding, substituting, and permuting elements, to yield eventually the surface structure of sentence, what is known as its final derived phrase-marker. It remains only to apply the phonological component of the grammar, the rules of which assign a pronunciation to the final derived phrase-marker, and the result is the sentence itself.

This brief discussion does little justice to transformational generative grammar; appreciation of the descriptive rigor and elegance of the theory and its explanatory power requires intensive study. But it should suffice to convey, or at least to give an inkling of, the way in which a transformational grammar describes linguistic competence, a speaker's knowledge of his language. His recognition of the sentences of the language is described by the total grammar, for the sentences produced by its rules are the sentences of the language. His knowledge of their deep structures, and especially of the grammatical relations they define, is charactrized by the base phrase-markers derived with the grammar's phrase structure

rules. His knowledge of surface structure is represented in the final derived phrase-markers, transformed from the base phrase-markers. His grasp of the interrelationships between sentences is represented by the base phrase-markers and the transformational rules, for related sentences, like "John is easy to please" and "Someone pleases John," share a common deep structure to which different transformations have been applied. Finally, his knowledge of the pronunciations of sentences is described by the phonological rules, and his knowledge of their meanings by the semantic rules.

### Way Grammar Is Learned

If transformational grammar of a language correctly describes what its speakers have learned and nonspeakers have not, then any explanation of language acquisition must explain how a speaker acquires a transformational grammar, how the speaker learns phrase structure rules and transformational rules and the deep and surface structures they generate.

It might be objected, however, that a transformational grammar is not learned by the speaker, that it is only a kind of logical formalization of a language considered in the abstract, existing in the imagination of the linguist, but not in the mind of the speaker. If this were so, then obviously we would not need to worry about how it might be learned, and we could happily ignore this unfamiliar and esoteric subject. But a number of recent psycholinguistic experiments (cf. Ervin-Tripp and Slobin, 1966) have supported the linguists' claims concerning the psychological reality of transformational grammar.

Consider first the notion of surface structure. Johnson (1965) has found that when college students are asked to memorize sentences, they are more likely to make errors between phrases than within them, as if the phrases defined by linguistic description function as psychological units in memory. For example, in memorizing the sentence "The tall boy saved the dying woman," a subject is more likely to make errors between *boy* and *saved* than between *tall* and *boy*, even though *saved* is likely to follow *boy* as *boy* is to follow *tall*. It appears as though the words of a sentence are grouped in memory exactly as they are in the final derived phrase-marker of the sentence.

Even more striking are the results of Fodor and Bever (1965), who have found that if we hear an extraneous noise (a click) in the middle of some word in the middle of a sentence, we are apt to think we heard it *between* words and *between phrases*. For example, if we are listening to the sentence, "That he was happy was evident from the way he smiled,"

and we hear a click in the middle of *happy,* we are apt to think we heard it *after* happy, in the boundary between the major constituents of the sentence. ( We are not just "postponing" the click, for if we hear it in the middle of the next word, *was,* we will think we heard it before that word.) It appears that the constituents of the sentence, its phrases as well as its words, function as units which resist disruption by extraneous stimuli. Evidently the constituents of a sentence are not mere linguistic abstractions, but are actual perceptual units.

Consider next the notion of deep structure, the base phrase-markers of sentences and the grammatical relations they define. In an unpublished experiment, Gough and Trabasso have shown that the order of elements in the deep structure of a sentence influences the order in which the listener will attend to them. To show this, college students were asked to classify sentences according to their logical subjects or objects; some students classified active sentences (e.g., "The boy has hit the girl"), others passive (e.g., "The girl has been hit by the boy"), and the speed with which they learned to classify the sentences was measured. Across both types of sentences, the students learned to classify sentences faster on the basis of their subjects (e.g., *the boy* in the previous examples) than their objects. Since the logical subject precedes the object in the surface structure of active sentences, but follows it in that of passive sentences, the order of elements in the surface structure or the sentence itself will not explain this difference. Hence we must assume that the order of these elements in the deep structure, which is the same for both active and passive versions of a sentence, is responsible for the difference. This suggests that the listener attends to the subject of the deep structure before its object, regardless of the order of those elements in the sentence itself. More generally, this suggests that to comprehend a sentence, a listener actually traces a sentence to its deep structure, that the deep structure of a sentence is actually present in the act of comprehension.

Finally consider the notion of transformations, the rules which relate surface structures to deep structures. In a grammar, transformations describe the relations between sentences derived from the same deep structure; for example, active and passive versions of the same sentence would be separated by a single transformation, passivization, while an active sentence would be separated from a passive negative question (e.g., "Hasn't the girl been hit by the boy?") by three. It has been shown that the number of transformations between sentences accurately predicts the extent to which they will actually be confused in recall (Mehler, 1963) and recognition (Clifton, Kurez, and Jenkins, 1965).

Thus the linguists' formal description of the relations between sentences closely corresponds to their psychological similarity.

Transformations not only describe the relations between sentences, they also describe the distance between the surface and deep structure of a sentence. For example, passive and negative sentences are farther removed from their deep structures than active and affirmative sentences. If, as suggested above, the listener traces a sentence to its deep structure to comprehend it, and if grammatical transformations indicate how far a sentence is from its deep structure, then the length of time it takes to understand a sentence should be related to its transformational complexity. Consistent with this, several experiments (McMahon, 1963; Gough, 1965; Slobin, in press) have found that the speed with which someone decides if a sentence is true or false, a task which clearly requires understanding of the sentence, is a function of its transformational complexity. This suggests that transformations, like surface and deep structure, actually enter into the comprehension of a sentence.

These several experiments are only a sample of a variety of recent studies in psycholinguistics, the results of which strongly suggest that surface and deep structure and grammatical transformation are not merely linguistic abstractions, but are psychologically real entities. They argue that a transformational grammar exists, not only in the imagination of the linguist, but in the mind of the speaker as well. We must thus take a transformational grammar to represent the speaker's competence, his knowledge of his language. We must thus take a transformational grammar to be the product of language acquisition which any theory of language learning must explain.

### Consequences of Position on Language Acquisition

The consequences of this conclusion for our view of language acquisition are profound. What the child acquires is a finite set of rules, a generative device which yields an infinite number of sentences and assigns to each one an underlying and superficial structure. With this knowledge, he is able to understand almost any sentence he encounters, and most of those will be sentences he is encountering for the first time; he is able to say an unlimited number of things, almost none of which will ever have been said before. What the child learns is not sentences to utter or meanings of sentences, but a capacity to produce or understand sentences.

This capacity consists in a set of highly abstract rules, phrase structure rules and transformational rules. The child learns these rules, despite the fact that he never encounters them or anything they describe. The child

hears sentences, but sentences are not rules, nor are they deep structures or surface structures. In fact, only the surface structures of sentences are even reflected, in any direct way, in the sentences themselves; the deep structures of sentences are related to the sentences themselves only by a complex and lengthy chain of inference. Thus we must totally reject the notion that language is learned through imitation, or indeed through any process whereby the child simply registers the observable regularities of sentences, for the important properties of language, the regularities necessary to perceive and understand its sentences, are *not observable*.

The child, who hears only a limited and random sample of English sentences in his environment, somehow develops phrase structure and transformational rules and the structure and relations they define; he learns a transformational grammar. As Chomsky (1965, p. 58) states, "It seems plain that language acquisition is based on the child's discovery of what from a formal point of view is a deep and abstract theory—a generative grammar of his language—many of the concepts and principles of which are only remotely related to experience by long and intricate chains of unconscious quasi-inferential steps." The child's "discovery," his feat of induction is marvelous. Mark Twain was once amazed by the fact that in France, even little children could speak French; we should be seriously amazed that any child learns any language. We have not much idea as yet of how it is accomplished, but it poses a wonderful problem for study.

## Notes

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[2] Technically speaking, they are identical except for the presence of dummy elements indicating the transformation which must be applied. This does not materially affect the present argument.

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# 9

## *How Little Sentences Grow into Big Ones* *

KELLOGG W. HUNT

*W*e are all aware of the planned obsolescence in automobiles. When I was a boy, cars were streamlined to reduce wind resistance. The ideal shape was the teardrop. Now instead, the outlines of cars are sharp and crisp, and no one talks of wind resistance, only of sales resistance. One year the ads proclaim the transcendent beauty of tail fins that shoot straight up like the tails on airplanes. But at the same moment, on the drawing boards of the car designers is the plan for the next year's model. Next year tail fins will shoot straight out like horizontal stabilizers instead.

In language arts teaching we have our obsolescence too, but it is never planned. No one advocates functional grammar or structural grammar because he knows it will not wear well. He advocates it instead because he thinks it is better than last year's model. It isn't always. Sometimes it wears badly.

The newest model in grammar is called generative-transformational. It is called generative because it aims to be as explicit as the mathematical formulae that generate a circle or a straight line on a sheet of graph paper. An explicit formula is capable of being proved true or false. A vague statement is not capable of being proved either true or false. So generative grammar aims to say explicitly many of the things that traditional grammars have said only vaguely. It tries to generate the same sentences that people generate, and it tries to generate none of the nonsentences. This grammar is by no means complete, but no other grammar is complete either, as any experienced grammarian knows. (The second half of the generative-transformational label will be touched on later in this paper.)

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### Nature of Generative-Transformational Grammar

So far, generative-transformational grammar appears only in the learned journals which most English teachers never read. There are only about three books on the subject which most English teachers can hope to wade through if they are diligent: Roberts' *English Syntax*,[1] Rogovin's *Modern English Sentence Structure*,[2] and Thomas's *Transformational Grammar and the Teacher of English*.[3] So when I try to survey the subject from beginning to end so quickly, you can expect that I will sweep past many points where you would like to challenge me, if you do not first lose interest.

I will call the grammar by its initials, g-t. Ordinarily, g-t grammar is presented as a series of formulae that to many people look horribly scientific. Sample formulae look like this:

$S \rightarrow NP + Predicate$

$Predicate \rightarrow Aux + VP$

$VP \rightarrow V + NP$

$NP \rightarrow Det + N$

$Det \rightarrow the$

$Aux \rightarrow Modal$

$Modal \rightarrow will$

$N \rightarrow cat$

$N \rightarrow milk$

$V \rightarrow drink$
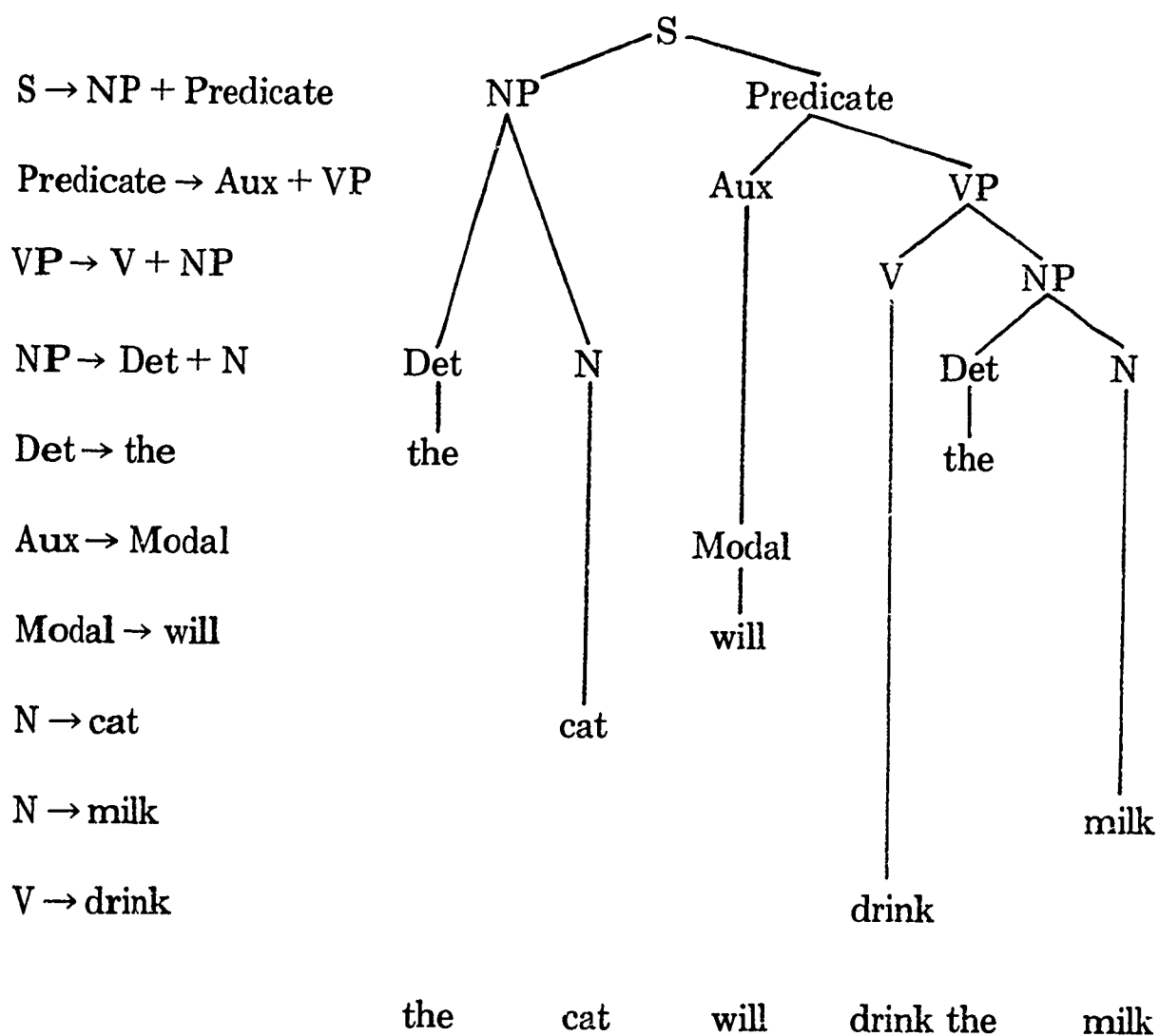
But what these formulae mean is not at all strange and forbidding. In fact it is so familiar to language arts teachers that I am afraid I will be dull and commonplace for the next several pages. I am going to talk

about some things you know so well that you may never have noticed them. First, I will talk about little sentences. These formulae would produce or generate the one little sentence *The cat will drink the milk*. They also ascribe a structural description to that sentence. A structural description is somewhat like a sentence diagram, though it is also different in some respects. The structural description says that the sentence can be broken first of all into two parts: *The cat* is one part and *will drink the milk* is the second. It also says that the second part is composed of two subparts, *will* and *drink the milk*. It breaks the second subpart into two sub-subparts *drink* and *the milk*. It breaks *the milk* down into its two parts, *the* and *milk*.

Who cares what the structural description of a sentence is? Why have we been analyzing sentences all these years? Have we known why? Actually there are several reasons. First, the meaning of the whole sentence is made from the meaning of exactly those components, not other components. That is, one *the* forms a meaningful unit with *milk*, but not with any other one word in the sentence: *drink the* is not a meaningful unit, nor is *will drink the*. Furthermore, *the milk* next forms a meaningful unit with drink: *drink the milk*. But *the cat the milk* is not a meaningful unit. This larger unit *drink the milk* forms a meaningful unit with *will* to produce the next unit, and finally *will drink the milk* joins with *the cat* to give the meaning of the whole sentence. Here we happen to have worked from the small units to the large unit, but we could have worked from large to small as we did in the formula. When you listen you work from large to small, but when you speak or write you work from small to large.

### Reasons for Structural Description of Sentences

One reason to give the structural description of the sentence, then, is to show which are the meaningful parts and what is the order in which those parts are joined together one after another to give the whole meaning of the sentence.

When I used to assemble model airplanes with my son, we had to learn about subassemblies and sub-subassemblies. We had to glue the parts together in the proper o.der or some part would be left over and we would have to tear the whole thing apart to get it in. Sentences too have their subassemblies, and the order of assembly is no chance matter.

There are two other reasons to show the structural description of a sentence. Some words are called nouns in this description and some are called verbs and some are called modals. Which names we use for these

sets of words would not matter, except that these names have been used for two thousand years. We could call them class 1, class 2, class 3 words instead if we gained anything by the change. One reason we group words into those various classes or sets is to show that thousands of English sentences can be made simply by substituting one noun in the same place as another noun and some new modal in place of another modal. But we never can substitute a noun for a modal or a modal for a noun. For instance if it is English to say

    The cat will drink the milk.

we know it will also be English to say

      John will drink the milk.
    The dog will drink the milk.
      Mary will drink the milk.

One animate noun substitutes here for another animate noun. Similarly one modal substitutes for another.

    The cat   can   drink the milk.
    The cat should drink the milk.
    The cat   may   drink the milk.
    The cat might drink the milk.

But we know too that a modal cannot be substituted for a noun. It is not English to say

    Could will drink the milk.
    The cat John the milk.

Regularities such as these make a language easy enough that people can learn it. When we learn a new word we unconsciously learn whether it is a noun or a verb, and so we unconsciously learn countless thousands of new sentences in which it can be used. So this is a second reason why the structural description of a sentence helps to show what we know when we know our language.

A third reason to show the structural description is to show what can be conjoined. For instance we said earlier that *the cat* is a grammatical unit, but that *drink the* is not. That tells us that it will not be English to conjoin *drink the* and *taste a* as in the sentence.

    The cat will drink the and taste a milk.

However, it will be English to say

    The cat will taste and drink the milk.

for *taste* and *drink* are both V's. But words are not all that can be conjoined. Larger structures can be too.

Here two VP's are conjoined though there is only one NP and one modal:

    The cat will drink the milk and go to sleep.

But only the components generated by the rules can be conjoined. Words cannot be conjoined at random.

Just as one noun phrase can be substituted for another noun phrase but for nothing else, so one noun phrase can be conjoined with another noun phrase, but not with anything else. Just as a VP can be replaced by another VP but not by a modal or an NP, so one can be conjoined to another bearing the same label in the formulae.

So when we give the structural description of a sentence, we are simply pointing out explicitly some of the things we know unconsciously when we know our language.

That is not all that a g-t grammar shows about little sentences. It also assigns certain functional relations to certain components. What are here called functional relations are not the same as the grammatical categories. For instance, *the cat* is an NP and *the milk* is another NP. But one is subject and the other is object. And the subject NP does not mean the same as an object NP. In the following sentences both *John* and *Mary* are NP's, but in one sentence *John* is the subject, and in the other *Mary* is the subject. Any youngster knows the difference between the two.

John hit Mary first.
Mary hit John first.

One NP is often substitutable grammatically for another NP, whether subject or object, but an NP which is subject does not mean the same as it does when it is object.

Take another simple example.

The boy is easy to please.
The boy is eager to please.

In one sentence, the boy pleases other people and is eager to do so. In the other sentence, other people please the boy and to do so is easy. In one sentence, *the boy* has the subject meaning relationship to *please*. In the other sentence, *the boy* has the object meaning relationship to *please*. But in both sentences, *boy* is the formal subject of the verb *is*.

The g-t grammarian makes further distinctions between the formal subject and the formal object and the semantic subject and the semantic object. For instance, the two following sentences mean the same thing (that is, if one is true the other is true, and if one is false the other is false).

The boy pleases other people.
Other people are pleased by the boy.

The semantic subject in both sentences is *the boy*: the boy does the

pleasing. But one verb agrees with the formal subject *the boy* which is singular, *the boy pleases*. The other verb agrees with the formal subject *other people* which is plural: *other people are pleased*. So in this sentence the semantic subject is not the same as the formal subject. The verb agrees with the formal subject and that may not be the semantic subject.

### Formulae for Making Bigger Sentences

The sentence we started out with was extremely simple. A g-t grammar gives formulae to produce all these different simplest sentences: sentences with direct objects, predicate nominals (John is a hero), predicate adjectives (John is heroic), indirect objects (John gave Mary a book), and many constituents which are not named in school book grammars. These simplest sentences used to be called kernel sentences by the g-t grammarian. That term is not being used in recent publications, but I shall continue to use it here.

A g-t grammar also gives you explicit directions on how to make big sentences out of little ones. Of course, being a native English speaker you know that, but you know it unconsciously without even knowing how you learned it. The grammar merely tries to describe what you know and what you do. But before I talk about how we make big sentences out of little sentences, I want to take a couple of minutes to give you a sample of how we make question sentences and imperative sentences and passive sentences out of statement or declarative sentences.

If you have a statement sentence with a modal, all you have to do to make it into a yes-no question sentence is to put the modal before the subject:

The cat will drink the milk.
Will the cat drink the milk?

The cat with the tiger markings and the ragged ears will drink the milk.
Will the cat with the tiger markings and the ragged ears drink the milk?

The formulae for other questions are almost as simple.

The inversion of modal and subject signals that a yes-no question is being asked. What is the meaning there signaled? It is simply "The speaker requests the listener to affirm or deny the following sentence." All yes-no questions bear that same relation to the statements from which they are formed. *Will the cat drink the milk?* means "The speaker requests the listener to affirm or deny the sentence, *The cat will drink the milk.*"

To produce an imperative sentence you must begin with a sentence

that has *you*, meaning the listener, as the subject, and *will* (the volitional *will*, not the future tense *will*) as its modal: *You will be here on time tomorrow*. The verb following *will* is always in the uninflected form, and that is just the form we always want. We say *You are here, You will be here*, and consequently we say in the imperative *Be here*, not *Are here*. To form an imperative sentence from such a declarative sentence, all you have to do is delete the *you will*: *Be here on time tomorrow*. The absence of the subject and the uninflected form of the verb are the formal signals that an imperative has been uttered. We say that *you will* has been deleted, because if we add a tag question at the end of the imperative, we put the *you* and the *will* back in, though in negative form.

Be here on time tomorrow, won't you?

The meaning signaled by the imperative is "The speaker requests that you will: Be here on time tomorrow."

Passive sentences are formed from kernel sentences by as simple a formula. Take this example: *The cat will drink the milk: The milk will be drunk by the cat*. (1) Whatever expression functioned as semantic direct object now becomes formal subject. (2) Whatever expression functioned as semantic subject now follows *by* (or is deleted along with *by*) at the end of the sentence. (3) The proper form of *be* is inserted before the main verb and the main verb takes the past participle form. Thus:

(1) The cat will (2) drink (3) the milk.
(3) The milk will (2) be drunk by (1) the cat.

These are the formal signals of the passive. The meaning of the passive does not differ from that of the active, but in a passive sentence the semantic subject does not need to be mentioned. Instead of saying "Someone hurt him" we can say "He was hurt."

### Variety of Transformations

These changes which we English speakers make on active declarative sentences to turn them into questions and imperatives and passives are called singular transformations, because they change a single sentence of one sort into a single sentence of another sort. Children before they ever get to school can form questions and imperatives in an endless stream, though they have no conscious notion of the general rules which they have learned to follow.

Which comes first, the question or the statement? Which comes first, "He will come" or "Will he come?" It depends on what you mean by "comes first." If you mean, "Which does the child learn first?" then we

have no certain answer. Having watched my own infants when they were angry and demanding, I feel certain that infants speak imperatives long before they speak any words at all. I remember too that four-year-olds generate questions much faster than their parents want to generate answers.

But the statement comes before the question in a thoroughly different sense. It is simpler to write a grammar which generates first the form and meaning of statements than to write one which generates questions first and then transforms them into statements.

In many elementary grammar books, I see questions and statements mixed together indiscriminately, though the relation of one to the other is never explained.

Far more useful for the language arts program, however, are the transformations which have been called sentence-combining. They take one sentence of a certain sort and another of a certain sort and combine them to produce one new sentence. The g-t grammar tries to tell exactly what changes are made in the process. The process of combining little sentences into bigger ones can be repeated an indefinite number of times so that two, three, four, five, and even ten or twenty can be combined into one complicated sentence. Below we will combine seventeen into one. Furthermore, the meaning of the complicated sentence is the meaning of all the simple sentences put together.

This process is particularly interesting because apparently the ability to combine more and more kernel sentences is a mark of maturity. The older a child becomes, the more he can combine. Apparently, too, the higher the IQ, the faster children learn to do this, so that by the time they are in the twelfth grade, the students with superior IQ's tend to be well ahead of students with average IQ's.

### The Process of Combining Sentences

I want to sketch for you that process of combining sentences.

Very young children combine two sentences into one by putting *and's* between. We can call this sentence coordination. Children in the earlier grades do this far more often than adults. In writing, fourth graders do so four or five times as often as twelfth graders in the same number of words. As they get older, they learn not to use sentence coordination so much. Also children use sentence coordination more often in speech than in writing. In fact, Dr. Griffin and his associates at Peabody have found that fifth graders use two or three times as much sentence coordination in their speech as they do in their writing for the same number of words.[4]

So we may think of sentence coordination as a relatively immature device for joining little sentences into bigger ones. It is a device which they will outgrow, or, better yet, which they will replace with the other devices I will now describe. Sentence coordination is the only transformation that we know to be used *less* frequently by older students.

Often two adjoining sentences have a certain relation between them such that the event recorded in one sentence happened at the same time as that in the other. When such is the case, *when* can be put in front of one sentence, making it an adverbial clause with the other as the main or independent clause:

> My mother came home and I got spanked. (*When* my mother, etc.)
> We climbed out on the end of the limb and it broke. (*When* we climbed out, etc.)

There are many subordinators besides *when* which introduce movable adverbial clauses, and, in writing, students use a few more of them as they get older. Dr. Griffin finds that in the speech of students from kindergarten to seventh grade, there is a general increase in their number. I find that in writing there is also a slight increase from the fourth grade up to the twelfth.[5]

So-called adjective relative clauses are also produced by sentence-combining transformations. They can be formed when one sentence contains the same noun or the same abverb of time or place as another sentence contains. Let me take as my main clause *The man did something* and then combine with it a number of different sentences in the form of adjective clauses. At the same time, we will notice that in all the examples I happen to have chosen, the adjective clause can be reduced by deletion to a single word modifier of a noun or to a phrasal modifier of a noun.

> The man did something.
>
> The man was big.
> The man (who was big) did something.
> The (big) man did something.
>
> The man was at the door.
> The man (who was at the door) did something.
> The man (at the door) did something.
>
> The man had a derby.
> The man (who had a derby) did something.
> The man (with a derby) did something.
>
> The man was swinging a cane.
> The man (who was swinging a cane) did something.
> The man (swinging a cane) did something.

We find that as students mature they use more and more adjective clauses in their writing. Furthermore, as students mature they use more and more of these single-word or phrasal modifiers of nouns. So we see that the ability to combine sentences into adjective clauses and to delete parts of the clause to produce single word or single phrase modifiers is indeed a mark of maturity.

Now let us see how a twelfth grader can combine five sentences into one. You will see that the twelfth grader is telling about a sailor. In fact the word *sailor* is subject of each of the sentences which he has consolidated into one.

> The sailor was tall.
> The sailor was rather ugly.
> The sailor had a limp.
> The sailor had offered them the prize.
> The sailor finally came on deck.

There are lots of bad ways to combine these sentences. One is with sentence coordinators:

> The sailor was tall and he was rather ugly and he had a limp and he had offered them the prize and he finally came on deck.

I have seen fourth graders who wrote almost that way.

Another bad way to combine the sentences is to produce a great number of relative adjective clauses all modifying the word *sailor*. No one would ever write like this:

> The sailor who was tall and who was rather ugly and who had offered them the prize finally came on deck.

Rarely do we let more than one full adjective clause modify a single noun. Instead we reduce the potential clauses to single word modifiers or phrasal modifiers.

I fancy most of you are way ahead of me already. You have been so uncomfortable with these bad sentences that you have already rewritten them as the twelfth grader did. But even so I am going to ask you to combine these sentences with me, one by one, slow motion, so we can study the process.

Below, I have numbered the minimal sentences S1, S2, etc. The procedure will be as follows. First, I will state a general transformational rule for English sentences. Then we will apply that rule to two of the sentences and see what we come out with. Next I will state another transformational rule, or the same one again, and we will apply that rule to the third sentence plus what we produced the previous time. Or

instead I may state a rule which changes what we produced though it does not incorporate a new sentence.

The rules read like this: If you have a sentence of one particular pattern and a second of another particular pattern, it will be good English if you rewrite them into one according to the formula. Instead of using abstract but more exact symbols like NP for noun phrase or VP for predicate, I have used the words *someone* or *something* for noun phrases, and the words *did something* for predicates in general.

*A twelfth grader consolidates 5 sentences into 1, using noun modifiers.*

S1 The sailor finally came on deck.
S2 The sailor was tall.
S3 The sailor was rather ugly.
S4 The sailor had a limp.
S5 The sailor had offered them a prize.

Transformation #1

Someone did something + Someone did something else → The someone (who did something else) did something.

Application to S1 and S2:

The sailor who was tall finally came on deck.

Transformation #2

Someone (who was X) did something → Someone X did something (or some X person did something).

Application to what we produced last time:

The tall sailor finally came on deck.

Transformation #1 again

Someone did something + Someone did something else → The someone (who did something else) did something.

Application to S3 plus what we produced last time:

The tall sailor (who was rather ugly) finally came on deck.

Transformation #2 again

Someone (who was X) did something → Someone X did something (or some X person did something).

Application to what we produced last time:

The tall, rather ugly sailor finally came on deck.

Transformation #3

Someone had something → someone with something.

Application to S4 plus what we produced before:

> The tall, rather ugly sailor with a limp finally came on deck.

Transformation #1 again

> Someone did something + Someone did something else → The someone (who did something else) did something.

Application to S5 plus what we produced before:

> The tall, rather ugly sailor with a limp, who had offered them a prize, finally came on deck.

An average fourth grader does not write four modifiers to a single noun. He will write only two or at most three at a time. He would be likely to resort to *and's* and produce about three sentences.

> The sailor was tall and rather ugly and had a limp. He had offered them the prize. Finally he came on deck.

I have just finished talking about noun modifiers, attempting to show that syntactic maturity is the ability to consolidate several sentences by reducing some sentences to modifiers of a single noun.

### The Nominalizing Tendency in Consolidation

The second tendency I will talk about today is called the nominalizing tendency. What the writer does is to take a whole sentence, or at least a whole predicate, and make it into a structure which can function like a noun. That is, the whole transformed sentence can now be subject in some other sentence, or object of a verb, or object of a preposition. This whole new sentence can then be nominalized in turn, and so on and so on. The best way to illustrate this process is to show you a number of kernel sentences and let you put them together.

*A twelfth grader consolidates 6 sentences into 1, nominalizing some.*

S1 Macbeth breaks up the feast with something.
S2 Macbeth remarks something.
S3 Macbeth displays fear.
S4 Macbeth fears a ghost.
S5 Banquo is the ghost.
S6 Only Macbeth sees the ghost.

Transformation #1

> Someone remarks about something → someone's remark about something.
> Someone displays something → someone's display of something.
> Someone fears something → someone's fear of something.

Application to S1 and S2:

Macbeth breaks up the feast with his remarks (about something).

Transformation #1 again, plus coordination plus deletion

(The coordination transformation is too complex to explain here.)

Application to S3 plus what we produced before:

Macbeth breaks up the feast with his remarks and his display of fear.

Transformation #1 again

Application to S4 plus what we produced before:

Macbeth breaks up the feast with his remarks and his display of fear of a ghost.

Transformation #2

Someone has something → the something of someone.

Application to S5 plus what we produced before:

Macbeth breaks up the feast with his remarks and his display of fear of a ghost of Banquo.

Transformation #3

Someone sees something → something is seeable (visible) to someone. (*Visible* replaces seeable somewhat as *edible* replaces *eatable*. *Understandable, divisible* are regular forms.)

Application to S6 plus what we produced before:

Macbeth breaks up the feast with his remarks and his display of fear of a ghost of Banquo visible only to him.

Here is still another sequence of transformations, this time showing the way in which a superior adult incorporates a great variety of kernel sentences as nominalizations, modifiers, etc., into a single sentence with highly complex relationships expressed between or among its constituent ideas.

*A superior adult consolidates 17 sentences into 1, using modifiers, nominalizations, etc.*

S1   He also noted S2.
S2   S3 would apply only to S4.
S3   Someone cuts back something.
     (Someone's cutback of something)
S4   Someone stockpiles weapons.
     (Someone's stockpiling of weapons)
     (He also noted that [someone's] cutback [of something] would apply only to [someone's] stockpiling of weapons.)

S5   The weapons are for an arsenal.
     (He also noted that the cutback would apply only to the stockpiling
     of weapons for an arsenal.)
S6   The arsenal is for atomic weapons  (?)
     (. . . an atomic [weapon] arsenal)
S7   The arsenal already bulges.
     (. . . an already bulging atomic arsenal)
S8   S3 would not affect the strength.
     (He also noted that the cutback would apply only to the stockpiling
     of weapons for an already bulging atomic arsenal and would have
     no effect on the strength.)
S9   The strength overwhelms someone.
     (. . . the overwhelming strength)
S10  The strength retaliates.
     (. . . the overwhelming retaliatory strength)
S11  The SAC has the strength.
     (. . . the overwhelming retaliatory strength of the SAC)
S12  The force has the strength.
     (. . . strength of the SAC and of the force)
S13  The force carries missiles.
     (. . . the missile force)
S14  The missiles are intercontinental.
     (. . . the intercontinental missile force)
S15  The fleet has the strength.
     (. . . strength of the SAC, of the intercontinental missile force, or the
     fleet)
S16  The fleet carries missiles.
     (. . . the missile fleet)
S17  The missiles are Polaris.
     (. . . the Polaris missile fleet)

He also noted that the cutback would apply only to the stockpiling
of weapons for an already bulging atomic arsenal and would have no
effect on the overwhelming retaliatory strength of the SAC, of the
intercontinental missile force, or the Polaris missile fleet.

## Summary and Conclusion

This has been exceedingly rough sketch of g-t grammar. We started
out with fairly explicit rules that generated an exceedingly simple sen-
tence and also its structural description. Then we saw that questions,
imperatives, and passives bear a certain explicit relationship to those
simple active statement sentences, both in form and in meaning.

Then we saw that quite complicated sentences can be consolidated out
of a number of exceedingly simple sentences. As children get older, they
can consolidate larger and larger numbers of them. Average twelfth
graders consolidate half a dozen with moderate frequency. But to find

as many as seventeen consolidated into one, one must look to the high-brow magazines such as *Harper's* and *Atlantic*. Only superior adults can keep that many in mind at once and keep them all straight, too.

No one yet knows whether elementary school children can be hurried along this path.

### Notes

[1] Paul Roberts, *English Syntax* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1964).

[2] Syrell Rogovin, *Modern English Sentence Structure* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1965).

[3] Owen Thomas, *Transformational Grammar and the Teacher of English* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1965).

[4] Roy C. O'Donnell, William J. Griffin & R. C. Norris, *Syntax of Kindergarten and Elementary School Children: A Transformational Analysis* (Champaign, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1967).

[5] Kellogg W. Hunt, *Grammatical Structures Written at Three Grade Levels* (Champaign, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1965).

# 10

## System and Variety in American English

Raven I. McDavid, Jr.

$\mathcal{I}$ t is a timeworn observation that the person who comes from the longer settled areas of the United States experiences a sense of bewilderment at the newness and the rapid growth of our Pacific cities. As we all know, Los Angeles was a sleepy sunbaked village barely two generations ago; now it is the third city in population in the United States; it is threatening the second position of Chicago, my present home town, all of four generations old. But even Chicago impresses me as raw and new; I was the sixth generation of my family to grow up in Greenville County in the northwestern corner of South Carolina. I share this status, incidentally, with our distinguished neighbor here in Santa Barbara, Harry Ashmore, the courageous publisher of the *Arkansas Gazette* who spoke out in Little Rock for decency and intelligence in the first major test of the Supreme Court decisions on desegregation. Yet Harry and I, who grew up a block apart, used to feel a little diffident in the presence of old families in Charleston, another century older than our community.

Each of these cities, however young or old, however small or large, is a manifestation of the same American tradition—urbanization as an outgrowth of industrialization—of the application of well-advertised Yankee ingenuity in devising machines to exploit the environment. Each of our cities is, in its own peculiar ways, a monument to the complexity of the human spirit—to the strange mixture of good and evil of which we are all composed. The gracious living of Charleston was built on the backs of slaves; the gracious affluence of San Marino and the glamour of Beverly Hills are complemented by smog, choked freeways, and the sullen fury of Watts. Yet the fluid if imperfect American urban setting has produced something else—what Sir Charles Snow describes as the most generously conceived system of education the world has ever known, a system of education based on the Jeffersonian principle that everyone should have

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the opportunity to gain that degree of education which will enable him to fulfill his potentialities as a human being. Toward this end the most important subject in the curriculum is English—the official language of our nation, the vehicle of most of our instruction, the carrier of our traditions, the medium through which we most often interact with our fellow citizens.

## Expansion in Knowledge of Language

Knowing that the interests of literature and composition will be well served by my colleagues on this panel, I shall confine my remarks to the position of the language itself, as one not ashamed to call himself a structural linguist in the American tradition.

I identify myself as a structural linguist because, as English teachers are fully aware, there are several actively competing groups of linguists, with different theoretical bases and different practical interests. Such differences, as we should know already and shall emphasize in various ways today, appear naturally in periods of intellectual ferment. It is not too much to say that in the past generation the expansion in our knowledge of language and of other aspects of human communication has been as striking as the expansion in our knowledge of the components of matter. And like the new knowledge in physics, the new knowledge in language has awe-inspiring potentialities for the destruction or the liberation of mankind; in fact, we may even say that the way we learn to use our new knowledge of language will decide whether our new knowledge of matter is a force for evil or for good. It is thus not surprising that at this time we linguists are continually reexamining all our previous conclusions.

The need for such continual reexamination is particularly apparent in the branch of linguistics to which I have devoted most of my attention— the study of American dialects through the Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada project and related projects. Even before the original study along the Atlantic Seaboard has been published, several of our colleagues have begun new investigations in communities studied in the original project, to see what changes a generation has brought. Students of dialects are well aware that changes in ways of living are inevitably reflected in changes in ways of talking; and in consequence they have a well-developed Al Smith syndrome that makes them go back and look at the record to see if a situation is still what it was reported to be.

It should come as no surprise that laymen do not always share the feeling that data on our language must be repeatedly reexamined. In the

agonizing deappraisals of the *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, most of the adverse critics were working in a theoretical vacuum, ignorant even of their own serious use of forms they deplored. And dialect investigators frequently find their local contacts surprised that investigations on the spot are even necessary. In December 1947, when I was completing the Georgia field investigations for the Linguistic Atlas of the Middle and South Atlantic States, the Milledgeville clerk of court expressed surprise at my mission. "Isn't all of that," she asked, "in *Gone with the Wind?*" With somewhat more tact than I have been known to display on other occasions, I finally explained that I was aware that Miss Mitchell had undoubtedly used, with accuracy, a great deal of old fashioned Georgia vocabulary. Nevertheless, there were differences: I wanted to see what had happened since Reconstruction; I wanted to get more accurate information on local pronunciation; I wanted to get information on a number of items that would simply not be recorded in a historical novel. After this explanation I did get an introduction to an excellent informant, who not only gave me full information, but so enjoyed the interview that he campaigned enthusiastically the next year for the reelection of the clerk of court.

### Need to Keep Language Knowledge Current

But even scholars may fail to see the need to reappraise the evidence. A systematic dialect survey of Britain was not started until nearly two decades after the beginnings of the Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada. Scholars refused to believe that there was any need to probe beyond the limits of A. J. Ellis's survey of dialect pronunciation—in the fifth volume (1889) of his *Early English Pronunciation*—or Joseph Wright's *English Dialect Grammar* and *English Dialect Dictionary* (1903-10). Wright, in fact, was sure he had been definitive; in the preface to his *Dictionary*, he stated that he had recorded all of the dialect words in English. However, a person who has seen only the prospectus for the *Linguistic Atlas of New England* would salute Wright's statement with a few bars of the "Colonel Bogey March." The lowly earthworm—charted in the prospectus—has an extraordinary variety of regional designations along the Atlantic Seaboard. The ordinary variety is known under such aliases as *angleworm, angledog, mudworm, fishworm, fishing worm, eaceworm, eastworm, ground worm, eelworm, robinworm,* and *redworm;* the larger ones as *dew worms, night crawlers, night creepers, night walkers, town worms,* and *hamestrings;* the patterns of distribution

for these variants are such that most of the terms must have been brought to America by settlers from the British Isles. Wright, however, gives us little evidence; of these terms, he records only *angledog* and *eaceworm*. Even the new survey of English dialects, directed by Harold Orton, fails to use the American experience to rectify Wright's omission. Although it would have been easy to ask for lexical variants, Orton's investigators sought only the simplex *worm* for pronunciation; our sole evidence for the British distribution of *fishworm, redworm,* and other names for the earthworm is a set of short field records which Guy Lowman made in 1937-8.

But if some of us ignore the variety in English, others cannot recognize the system for the details. This approach is painfully evident in the drearily repetitious adverse reviews of the *Third New International.* As scholars competent to evaluate a dictionary have observed, few if any of the adverse journalistic reviews have asked substantive questions about the system of selecting the vocabulary, about the system of representing pronunciation, about the system of labeling usage. Their attention is focused on a few items: (1) whether *ain't* (and the less shocking sexual and excretory four-letter words) should be included, and under what label; (2) whether *bi-monthly* should be recognized as meaning "twice a month" (for which I have good evidence in cultivated speech, from 1930) or only as "every two months"; (3) whether *disinterested* should be recognized in its oldest English meaning "apathetic" (as used by John Donne) or only in the later meaning "unbiased." These critics have failed miserably in their responsibility; they have never looked at the history of lexicography in English to discover what are the generally accepted obligations of lexicographers and the areas generally recognized as outside their competence; only on such principles can a reviewer fairly appraise the achievement of a particular dictionary.

## The Teaching of Standard English

But, however important an understanding of system may be for an evaluation of dictionaries, it is far more important in the practical situations where some of us, especially the elementary teachers, must try to teach the use of the standard language to those groups for whom the standard language is not native. On one hand, and most obviously, we face children whose home language is something other than English. In Chicago, for instance, we have fifty-five elementary schools with at least fifty students with a home language other than English (until two weeks

ago there was only one teacher in the Chicago schools permanently assigned to this problem; now there are three).

I do not know how many California children face this problem, but relatively and absolutely I suspect the problem is far greater here. For each of these home languages we need special materials dealing with differences within the system: the system of pronunciation, the system of grammatical endings, the system of sentence patterns.

The other group of children without standard English is comprised of those who have grown up in communities or sections of communities where they normally do not have a chance to develop a productive command of the patterns of standard English. Specifically, but not exclusively, the Negroes in our urban slums live in areas where people do not alternate—as I trust most of us do—*I do* and *he does, she makes* and *they make*. Instead, they may alternate *he does* and *he do, they make* and *they makes,* in patterns which can no doubt be described in terms of a set of situations, but patterns which are not the patterns of standard English as it is known today. However much we sympathize with the aspirations of these people, we face the fact that their grammatical practices are an obstacle to employment in clerical or sales positions and to any success in higher education. Yet the conventional English or language arts program in the schools does little to teach such students the habitual use of the proper concord of such forms as *I do* and *he does.* By and large the program emphasizes the finding and marking of discrete errors, a method that assumes that students already have had some exposure to the traditional middle class norms on which our educational system is built. We cannot say we are adequately facing the problems of these students until—to take this one example of many—we have a program that produces an inevitable coupling of a singular noun or a third person pronoun and the (-S) form of the verb, so that we have *he keeps, she adds, it misses, the man has, the girl does, the paper says,* but *we keep, you add, they miss, the men have, the girls do, the papers say.*

In other words, we have to recognize that some groups in our society, productively if not receptively, have a somewhat different grammatical system from that of the standard language; we must recognize variety within the system itself.

### System versus Variety in Language Study

Now if some observers are so preoccupied with varieties in detail that they ignore the system of the language, others are so interested in

establishing a rigorous system that they overlook varieties. This has been especially true of the more eloquent advocates of the phonemic school which one may call *trageremics* and the syntactic school which one may call *chomskemics*. On some of us with a different body of experience, their categorical statements have the same effect as the appearance of a plug hat in a shanty Irish neighborhood after a heavy snow. Even before the official publication of the Trager-Smith *Outline of English Structure* (1951), some of us were already on record as recognizing that the widely advertised overall pattern could not accommodate certain significant elements in our pronunciation systems, and time has done nothing to lessen our skepticism. More recently, I find that by the time I have read six illustrative sentences in Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures* (1957), I have two disagreements on grammaticality: at least one sentence that he characterizes as grammatical I would reject in my normal discourse; one of those he rejects as ungrammatical would seem acceptable to me in some contexts. To accommodate cur differences would require a far more intricate set of formulae, or "rules," than has yet been offered. In sum, within the system the phenomena of language are infinitely more varied than the designs laid down by Trager and Chomsky would recognize; investigators who work in the field with hundreds of informants in dozens of communities should not be surprised to find, on all levels of the language, variations they had not anticipated before. The system must accommodate the variations, but variations make sense only in terms of the system. In our teaching design we must accommodate both system and variation, else we lobotomize our students.

Now this kind of tension between pressures for order and pressures for variety is not new; it is not confined to the study of American English, or even to linguistics. In Europe, a century ago, the Young Grammarians were passionately enunciating *Die Lautgesetzesausnahmlösigkeit*, the principle that sound laws admit of no exceptions. The French dialectologists, on the other hand, were asserting with equal passion *"Chaque mot a son histoire"*—that each word has its own history. Even earlier we had the debates over etymology between the analogists, who believed in regularity, and the anomalists, who didn't; some of the suggestions of the latter group were so bizarre as to provoke from Voltaire the quip that etymology was a discipline in which the consonants meant nothing and the vowels meant less. Literature, too, has seen the same kind of debate. Walter Pater's essay "Romanticism" points out the basic disagreement between the classical temperament which emphasizes order and the romantic temperament which emphasizes strangeness; John

Livingston Lowes comments on the same kind of disagreement in *Convention and Revolt in Poetry*. Nor are such disagreements limited to the humanities. American historians still debate the significance of the frontier or the economic bias of our Founding Fathers. And even in physics there is debate as to whether light is waves or particles.

Happily, in most disciplines we have seen a growing process of accommodation as scholars become more self-assured and more aware of the complexity of phenomena; it is possible that no one viewpoint provides all the answers, but that each has its own contributions to make. So physicists now are willing to accept light as waves for some purposes, as particles for others. In most American universities, English departments allow a wide range of critical attitudes; Chaucer and Conrad, Melville and Mark Twain, Milton and Henry James may provoke distinguished teaching and research. In historical linguistics, too, the disputation is less bitter than it used to be. We recognize that we must accept the regularity of sound change as a starting point; otherwise we get chaos. Then, when we establish our regular patterns of sound change, we do not ignore our apparent exceptions but classify them in turn and seek rational explanations. So in French we note that *l'amour* preserves its medieval vowel instead of following *le douceur, le chaleur* and the other nouns of its family; a southern French pronunciation has prevailed, probably influenced by the Provencal emphasis on courtly love. In the German Rhineland, the consonant changes that distinguish *Plattdeutsch* from *Hochdeutsch* are more widely spaced than we would expect; the limits of various changes follow the boundaries of German principalities that existed before the French Revolution.

In our discussions of modern English, we have barely reached the point where we can accommodate both the passionate belief in system and the passionate belief in variety. Perhaps we are too close to the phenomena in time; perhaps we are too close to the issues in emotional commitment. A full appraisal of the question demands that we recognize both the parts of the system and the dimensions of variation for each part.

### Communication More Than Vocal Signals

Human communication, we have learned in recent years, involves far more than the system of arbitrary vocal signals that we call languages. There are many modes, each of them rigorously structured and as culturally determined as the mode of language; each is so habitual, so "normal," that we are sometimes surprised when people in other cultures

act in accordance with other norms. Edward T. Hall, an anthropologist at the Illinois Institute of Technology, was the first to assess the role of *proxemics*, of spatial relationships in human communication. In many places, notably his book *The Silent Language* (1959), he has shown that two American males, in face to face communication, normally maintain a distance of about twenty-three inches. A male coming within a foot of another male is suspected of unpleasant aggression; the normal reaction is either retreat or a physical countermeasure. But a Latin American male cannot communicate comfortably with another male if they are more than a foot apart; the North American who insists on his customary distance of two feet is described as cold or unsympathetic. After years of mutual misunderstanding, our State Department took the step of explaining to our Foreign Service officers that the shorter distance between speakers is a cultural feature which visitors to Latin America must learn to accept.

Another feature of human communication which we are just beginning to study is *haptics*, the phenomena of physical contact, first examined by William Austin, also of Illinois Institute of Technology. Very slight differences may indicate drastic changes in relationships; a boy and a girl may sit close beside each other on a sofa, with thighs touching, innocently studying their lessons, but an almost imperceptible shift in the amount or kind of contact can constitute an invitation to another sort of activity. As with proxemics, haptics vary between cultures; in Mainz one summer I noticed that a boy and a girl thought nothing of applying half-nelsons and hammerlocks to each other as they walked along the street holding hands—an activity probably innocent enough, but sufficient to get students in this country called up before a Dean of Women, if not before the Un-American Activities Committee.

Another mode of communication is that of *kinesics*, gestures and other body movements, most fully explored by Ray Birdwhistell, of Temple University and Eastern Pennsylvania Psychiatric Institute, in one monograph (1952) and a series of lectures, mostly unpublished, in the last fifteen years. The extent to which these movements contribute to human communication can be seen if one watches movies of unrehearsed situations. In a group discussion there is a rhythmic pattern of head and eye movements of the listeners, as they follow the speaker of the moment. Even more striking is the pattern of physical movement during a psychiatric interview; the gestures build up as hidden tensions work toward the surface, until a patient actually kicks her shoe off in unconscious emphasis. Or an overly protective mother may move between her son and

his psychiatrist, negating with gesture the case she has been making orally.

Another mode of communication, analyzed by Trager, Smith, Hockett, and others, involves an assortment of nonlinguistic modulations of the stream of speech, lumped together as *paralanguage*. Some of these, such as drawl, we associate with regional types of speech. Some, such as extra-high or extra-low pitch, or the flattening of intonation contours, we associate with emotional states.[1] Some others we associate with public roles. Hillbilly music, for instance, seems to require heavy nasality, heavier than even the well-attested nasality of normal Southern Mountain speech. An army top sergeant uses pharyngeal rasp and extra loudness to browbeat his charges, as in the well-known command, "Suck up that gut!" A primary teacher conventionally uses an open pharynx and wheedling intonation, to achieve the so-called "Miss Frances" voice: "Children, behave yourselves and eat your lunch." A topkick trying the Miss Frances wheedle on a detail of recruits would be laughed out of the army; a primary teacher using the topkick's rasp and overloudness, however much her charges deserved it, might be hauled before the PTA. Paralanguage offers a profitable and almost uninvestigated field for the student of human behavior.

Proxemics, haptics, kinesics, and paralanguage are all outside the formal structure of language. A part of language in communication, though linguists still argue about its specific place in language, is the area of *suprasegmentals* or *prosodics*, of stress and intonation and juncture, to take these phenomena as they appear in English. The accurate use of these suprasegmentals is an even better clue than the pronunciation of vowels or consonants, when we come to setting off the native speaker from the foreign.

Finally we come to the system of language itself. There is a system of sounds, of phones and phonemes or of distinctive features and morphophonemes. We likewise have a system of forms, of inflections to mark grammatical relationships, and of derivations to make word-bases into words or one word into another. We have a system of arrangements which we call syntax—patterns of making phrases and clauses and sentences. And finally we have what we might call a system of content, a body of words or morphemes with their meanings. The arrangements of meaningful words built up by derivational and inflectional suffixes, all pronounced by human beings in social contexts, constitute a language; and communication through language in turn is enriched by paralanguage, kinesics, haptics, and proxemics.

### Drive toward Simplification of Language

So complex is this process of human communication that we often seek to strip it of variables that may lead to misunderstanding. The urge for a stripped down kind of communication is especially strong in the field which Norbert Wiener called *cybernetics*, the science of directing machines to perform repetitive acts, sometimes of extreme difficulty and complexity. But these machines, as the men who mind them recognize, are high-speech morons; they cannot sort out stylistic differences but must have their tasks broken down into smaller steps. This barebones computer language is but an extreme case of what is true of all scientific and technical language: that there is a special vocabulary shared by writers and readers, even to the semantic implications, and there is a set of syntactic conventions for developing sentences. The need for explicit vocabulary and syntax becomes even greater in scientific abstracting, greater still in machine translation, where the computer cannot be expected to sort out subtleties of meaning except at a prohibitive cost; the machines will present comprehensible English versions of the *Bulletins of the Magnitogorsk Electronic Laboratories* generations before they will render the nuances of Sholokov's novels.

In a smaller degree, of course, we find consistent meanings of words and relative uniformity of syntax in more familiar kinds of speech and writing. The language of communication, especially of commercial aircraft with each other, or with the ground, is rigorously restricted, since there is seldom a next time for someone to profit from a mistake. For the same reason, the structure of military field orders is rigidly prescribed; the words *not*, *or*, and *if* are forbidden, since they might lead an officer to speculation instead of action. On a more familiar level, manuals of instruction in the use of equipment, whether automatic rifles, electric blenders or dictionaries, need to explain unequivocally what the user is dealing with. For the same reason, conventional business correspondence follows set patterns, and elegant variations usually end up in the circular file of letters we never finished reading.

But even leaving out the uniformity of specialized fields of communication, we find that we share a great deal with other speakers of the language. There is little variation in the structure of pronunciation, derivation, inflection, or syntax. Word order in English is now fairly well fixed, so that in statements we cannot put objects before verbs and subjects after them. We even share much of the vocabulary; and among the words which we do not share, in a lexical inventory of some half million

items, we can usually reach fair agreement on whether or not an unfamiliar word is a technical or scientific term.

### Dimensions of Variety in Usage

Conceding this extensive agreement, we must still recognize a number of dimensions of variety in usage; Martin Joos and Harold Allen have so far presented the most elaborate pictures, but it is possible that other dimensions will be revealed by more detailed investigation.

One of the first dimensions of usage is that of the medium; we cannot write exactly as we speak. When we write we necessarily exclude the effects of proxemics, haptics, kinesics, and paralanguage; at most they may be suggested by description or by using synonyms of the verb *to say*—*whined, minced, roared,* or the like. We ordinarily disregard most of the features of pronunciation and let the reader supply them. This creates a problem for the teacher who is trying to get his students to write as naturally as they talk. A student who tries to write just as he talks may be misunderstood, because there is no way in writing to represent directly the suprasegmentals of stress, intonation, and juncture which in speech may produce special emphasis; instead, the writer must use syntactic devices in such a way that any reader will perceive where the emphasis lies. Even the vocabulary of speech may differ from that of writing. Few of the sesquipedalian terms of organic chemistry are ever spoken; such a term as *fice*, for a small noisy nondescript dog, is written only in local color fiction.

Another dimension is that of history. Many words or meanings or grammatical forms or pronunciations that were once used are not a part of twentieth century English. The term *obsolete* indicates that there has been no evidence of use in a very long time; *archaic* that there has been little evidence in a long time, but not quite so long. The cutoff date chosen is always an arbitrary one, and decisions are subject to correction in the light of new evidence. The *Oxford English Dictionary* labeled as possibly obsolete the use of *disinterested* meaning apathetic, because it had no evidence since 1797, but the label was removed in the 1930 supplement after the readers had discovered ample evidence in 1928 standard British usage. A more subtle kind of obsolescence is that of words which are widely used but by the older and less sophisticated. Words of this kind are often labeled *dial*, but with the dialect unspecified: *old fashioned* would probably be a better designation. In the other direction, we know that there are linguistic innovations, that some features have come in recently. The pronunciation of an *l* in such words as *calm* and *palm*

would fall into this category. For practical purposes, dictionaries do not label items of this class; new features are not likely to be included in a dictionary until they are well established.

Besides general history, there is a dimension of personal history or maturity. The keynote to this scale is that one acts and talks his age. Otherwise incongruity results as when a plump middle aged housewife appears in a bikini. We recognize a similar incongruity where a middle aged woman describes a cake as *yummy*, an adjective associated with children in the primary grades or in commercials addressed to them. We know that college students do not use the slang of teenagers, and that we aging citizens use either type of slang at our peril, unless we restrict our use to that of the scientific observer (my own teenage savages will accept my use of slang in that role, but not otherwise).

A fourth scale of usage is what Joos calls the scale of responsibility. There is a general range within which we are tolerated; excess sloppiness or excess preciosity will be rejected. The fine uninhibited fury of the late beats has run its course, with even Kerouac now typed as a regurgitater of his own mannerisms. On the other hand, a writer or speaker may find himself out of rapport with his audience because he is too careful. Though the mores of one age may favor a more or less formal norm of responsibility than those of another, the tolerable range of deviation from the normal semes fairly constant.

A fifth scale, that of style, is well known to us from Joos's *The Five Clocks*. In the center is the style of the small committee, whose members understand each other enough to speak informally but must still supply background information. On one side, we find the formal language of public address and the highly concentrated style of great literature; on the other are the casual style, where background information is taken for granted, and the intimate, where a few words may convey as much as paragraphs of formal statement.

A dialectologist like myself is especially concerned with the sixth dimension, that of geographical extent. Certain scientific and technical terms are truly international; their use knows no language boundaries. In contrast, the cow-call *chay!* seems to be restricted, in North America to a small area in eastern South Carolina. Between these extremes, we have dialect areas and larger dialect regions and some national limits. A *homer* in the United States is a *home run* in baseball; in Canadian baseball *homer* also has this meaning, but in hockey Canadians use it to label an official suspected of favoring the home team. Canadians and Britons use *fridge* for refrigerator and *perm* for permanent wave; but Canadians and

Australians, like us, have not adopted the British *telly* for television, a beautifully snide term that deserves immortality.

### Social Dimension in Language

We also have a social dimension in language. *Them boys* tells us much about the status of the speaker; so does *he do* as the third singular present. But we must not let ourselves be tricked into believing that imparting the proper use of a few grammatical forms will fulfill our obligations as English teachers to bring into the center of our culture those groups who have not had our educational and social advantages. The extent of the problem was seen by Fries in 1940, in the final chapter of his *American English Grammar*. He concluded that vulgar English is chiefly distinguished from standard English, not by differences in the grammatical system or even by differences in grammatical details, but by a general impoverishment in language which is symptomatic of cultural impoverishment. The speaker of vulgar English has a smaller vocabulary, less variety in his sentence structure, a less extensive inventory of prepositions and conjuctions, fewer subordinate clauses.

Fries's conclusions have found recent support in the work of the British social psychologist Basil Bernstein, who distinguishes between an *elaborate code*, characteristic of the middle class, and a *simple code*, characteristic of the working and lower classes. The difficulty of getting working class people to accept middle class values pivots upon their differences in the use of language. The contrast is shown when a mother wants her child to go to the back of the bus and the child refuses. The middle class mother will verbalize the request and attempt to reason with the child; the working class mother will utter a peremptory command and reinforce it with a slap. Here we may suspect is part of the difficulty in educating the culturally disadvantaged child. Reports from the homes of such children indicate that there is very little effort to create habits of verbal interaction or word play; child management is basically a set of simple commands, physically reinforced. With little encouragement to practice sentence patterns and explore the possibilities of variation, it is small wonder that these children have difficulty in mastering the art of reading; it is a marvel that any succeed.

Our final dimension is that of associations, of language patterns shared with people we are brought in contact with. *Slang* is a matter of vogue; the speaker wants to be with it. *Hot* as a general term of approbation gave way to *cool;* now the vogue adjectives seems to be *tough* and *boss*. *Technical language* and *argot*, however different their connotations, are

practically the same, as in-group modes of speech; Chicago critics and narcotic addicts are both distinguished by linguistic practices unknown to the uninitiate.

When we have indicated these dimensions and the possibility that others exist, we can sympathize with the lexicographer. All of these dimensions interlock; an accurate statement of usage would involve indications of the places on each scale where a word or meaning or grammatical construction or pronunciation happens to fit. Since lexicographers can not have all the information about all dimensions for all entries, or represent them if they had, one who takes his duty seriously is tempted to throw up his hands and abandon all labeling.

A few illustrations will illustrate the complexity of the problem. Something which is historically of the past may be preserved regionally, such as the past tense *holp*, "helped," pronounced often as a homonym of *hope*. Such forms are especially common in *relic areas* as the coast of Maine or the outer banks of North Carolina. They may also be preserved socially; older preterite and participial forms, such as *driv* and *writ*, still occur among the uneducated.

Or a regional feature may acquire social and even ethnic overtones. The uninflected third singular present, as *he do*, is widely found in Southern England, especially in East Anglia. Brought to the colonies, it has survived strongest in the Southeastern United States because poor communications, a rural economy, and a poor educational system gave it a greater opportunity to take root. In the same way, the economic and educational handicaps of the Southern Negro mean that such nonstandard forms are more common among Southern Negroes than among Southern whites. And so, since the uneducated Southerners migrating to Northern cities are more likely to be Negro than white, and the Negro is more visible in the society, *he do* in Chicago becomes identified as a Negro form.

### What We Can Do in School

If the difficulties of describing usage are formidable to the lexicographer, they must seem overwhelming to those who would plan a program for the schools. It might be easiest to evade the question. But society will not let us evade it; people want to know what is "right," that is, what won't cause difficulties for them, and we are supposed to tell them.

Actually, we can do much.

When we look at our resources, we discover that we have very good evidence on some dimensions. We are perhaps best off in the historical

dimension. We have a wide range of texts, from all periods; we have the incomparable *Oxford English Dictionary;* we have such other historical dictionaries as the Michigan *Middle English Dictionary,* the *Dictionary of American English,* the *Dictionary of Americanisms;* we will soon have historical dictionaries of Canadian and Jamaican English. For territorial differences, we can draw on the various parts of the Linguistic Atlas project, and soon we will have Cassidy's *Dictionary of American Regional English.* For social differences, we have good evidence from the Linguistic Atlas, supplemented by a group of intensive local studies, with more to come.

On the other hand, perhaps because all of these scales show shifting values, we can't sort out clearly the differences between styles, the area of responsibility, the maturational scale, or the range of associations. To take an example of the last problem, what was yesterday the argot of the brothel, or the narcotic addict, may be today's argot of the jazz musician and tomorrow's teenage slang. This drift has already gone so far that those who know the original meanings of present-day jazz terms sometimes find their blood curdling when the terms are used by innocent teenagers: *boogie-woogie,* for instance, originally meant tertiary syphilis.

Yet even here we can offer a few suggestions:

1. We can make our children aware of the problems of variation in language.

2. We should introduce them to the best sources of evidence, both primary (like the Linguistic Atlas) and secondary, like Atwood's *Survey of Verb Forms.*

3. We should encourage our students to observe and read widely and to become sensitive to contextual variations.

4. We should also encourage them to develop flexibility and versatility in their use of language and not to confine themselves to any one style.

5. Finally, we should make them willing to change their usage as they see the patterns of the culture change, and to accept change and variety in the usage of others.

### Note

[1] The correlation between psychic depression and the flattening of intonation curves has been noted informally and intuitively by many lay observers; e.g., Betty Friedan, in *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1963).

# 11

## Some Sources of Reading Problems for Negro Speakers of Nonstandard English

WILLIAM LABOV

*I*t seems natural to look at any educational problem in terms of the particular type of ignorance which is to be overcome. In this discussion, we will be concerned with two opposing and complementary types:

ignorance of standard English rules on the part of speakers of nonstandard English

ignorance of nonstandard English rules on the part of teachers and text writers

In other words, the fundamental situation that we face is one of reciprocal ignorance, where teacher and student are ignorant of each other's system, and therefore of the rules needed to translate from one system to another.

The consequences of this situation may be outlined in the following way. When the teacher attempts to overcome the first kind of ignorance by precept and example in the classroom, she discovers that the student shows a strong and inexplicable resistance to learning the few simple rules that he needs to know. He is told over and over again, from the early grades to the twelfth, that *-ed* is required for the past participle ending, but he continues to write

I have live here twelve years.

and he continues to mix up past and present tense forms in his reading. In our present series of interviews with Harlem youngsters from ten to sixteen years old, we ask them to correct to classroom English such sentences as the following:[1]

He pick me.
He don't know nobody.
He never play no more, man.
The man from U.N.C.L.E. hate the guys from Thrush.

Words such as *man* and *guys* are frequently corrected, and *ain't* receives a certain amount of attention. But the double negative is seldom noticed, and the absence of the grammatical signals -*s* and -*ed* is rarely detected by children in the fifth, sixth, or seventh grades. There can be little doubt that their ignorance of these few fundamental points of English inflection is connected with the fact that most of them have difficulty in reading sentences at the second grade level.

There are many reasons for the persistence of this ignorance. Here I will be concerned with the role played by the second type of ignorance: the fact that the child's teacher has no systematic knowledge of the nonstandard forms which oppose and contradict standard English. Some teachers are reluctant to believe that there are systematic principles in nonstandard English which differ from those of standard English. They look upon every deviation from schoolroom English as inherently evil, and they attribute these mistakes to laziness, sloppiness, or the child's natural disposition to be wrong. For these teachers, there is no substantial difference in the teaching of reading and the teaching of geography. The child is simply ignorant of geography; he does not have a well-formed system of nonstandard geography to be analyzed and corrected. From this point of view, teaching English is a question of imposing rules upon chaotic and shapeless speech, filling a vacuum by supplying rules where no rules existed before.

Other teachers are sincerely interested in understanding the language of the children, but their knowledge is fragmentary and ineffective. They feel that the great difficulties in teaching Negro and Puerto Rican children to read are due in part to the systematic contradictions between the rules of language used by the child and the rules used by the teacher. The contribution which I hope to make here is to supply a systematic basis for the study of nonstandard English of Negro and Puerto Rican children, and some factual information, so that educators and text writers can design their teaching efforts with these other systems in mind.

### Priority of Problems

Within the school curriculum, there seems to be an order of priority of educational problems that we face in large urban centers. Many skills have to be acquired before we can say that a person has learned standard English.[2] The following list is a scale of priority that I would suggest as helpful in concentrating our attention on the most important problems:

    a. Ability to understand spoken English (of the teacher).
    b. Ability to read and comprehend.

   c.  Ability to communicate (to the teacher) in spoken English.
   d.  Ability to communicate in writing.
   e.  Ability to write in standard English grammar.
   f.  Ability to spell correctly.
   g.  Ability to use standard English grammar in speaking.
   h.  Ability to speak with a prestige pattern of pronunciation (and avoid
         stigmatized forms).

I would revise this list if it appeared that the teacher could not under-
stand literally the speech or writing of the child; weaknesses in *c* or *d*
could conceivably interfere with the solution to *b*. But considering all
possibilities, this list would be my best estimate, as a relative outsider
to the field of elementary education; it is of course subject to correction
by educators.

In dealing with children from English-speaking homes, we usually
assume *a*. In the extreme cases where the child cannot understand the
literal meaning of the teacher, we have to revise our approach to teach
this ability first. For the most part, however, we take the first academic
task of the child to be *b*, developing the ability to read and comprehend.
Certainly reading is first and most urgent in terms of its effect on the
rest of learning, and it is most seriously compromised in the schools of
the ghetto areas in large Northern cities. The problem of reading is so
striking today that it offers a serious intellectual challenge as well as a
pressing social problem. One must understand why so many children are
not learning to read, or give up any claim to understand the educational
process as a whole.

### Structural vs. Functional Conflicts

We have dealt so far with a series of abilities. Obviously the desire to
learn is in some way prior to the act of learning. Our own current re-
search for the Office of Education is concerned with two aspects of the
problem:[3]

> (a) structural conflicts of standard and nonstandard English: interference
> with learning ability stemming from a mismatch of linguistic structures.

> (b) functional conflicts of standard and nonstandard English: interference
> with the desire to learn standard English stemming from a mismatch in
> the functions which standard and nonstandard English perform in a given
> culture.

In the discussion that follows, we will be concerned only with the first
type of conflict.

We should also consider whose speech, and whose learning problems,

must be analyzed. Here again there is an order of priority, based on the numbers of people involved, the extent of neglect, and the degree of structural differences involved. In these terms, the educational problems of the Negro children in large cities must be considered most pressing; secondly, those of Puerto Rican and Mexican children from Spanish-speaking homes; and third, the problems of white youth from Appalachian backgrounds and other underprivileged areas.

Is there a Negro speech pattern? This question has provoked a great deal of discussion in the last few years, much more than it deserves. At many meetings on educational problems of ghetto areas, time which could have been spent in constructive discussion has been devoted to arguing the question as to whether Negro dialect exists. The debates have not been conducted with any large body of factual information in view, but rather in terms of what the speakers wish to be so, or what they fear might follow in the political arena.

For those who have not participated in such debates, it may be difficult to imagine how great are the pressures against the recognition, description, or even mention of Negro speech patterns.[4] For various reasons, many teachers, principals, and civil rights leaders wish to deny that the existence of patterns of Negro speech is a linguistic and social reality in the United States today. The most careful statement of the situation as it actually exists might read as follows: *Many features of pronunciation, grammar, and lexicon are closely associated with Negro speakers—so closely as to identify the great majority of Negro people in the Northern cities by their speech alone.*

The match between this speech pattern and membership in the Negro ethnic group is of course far from complete. Many Negro speakers have none—or almost none—of these features. Many Northern whites, living in close proximity to Negroes, have these features in their own speech. But this overlap does not prevent the features from being identified with Negro speech by most listeners: we are dealing with a stereotype which provides correct identification in the great majority of cases, and therefore with a firm base in social reality. Such stereotypes are the social basis of language perception; this is merely one of many cases where listeners generalize from the variable data to categorical perception in absolute terms. Someone who uses a stigmatized form 20 to 30 percent of the time will be heard as using this form all of the time.[5] It may be socially useful to correct these stereotypes in a certain number of individual cases, so that people learn to limit their generalizations to the precise degree that their experience warrants: but the overall tendency is

based upon very regular principles of human behavior, and people will continue to identify as Negro speech the pattern which they hear from the great majority of the Negro people that they meet.

In the South, the overlap is much greater. There is good reason to think that the positive features of the Negro speech pattern all have their origin in dialects spoken by both Negroes and whites in some parts of the South. Historically speaking, the Negro speech pattern that we are dealing with in Northern cities is a regional speech pattern. We might stop speaking of Negro speech, and begin using the term "Southern regional speech," if that would make the political and social situation more manageable. But if we do so, we must not deceive ourselves and come to believe that this is an accurate description of the current situation. The following points cannot be overlooked in any such discussion:

1. For most Northern whites, the only familiar example of Southern speech is that of the Negro people they hear, and these Southern features function as markers of Negro ethnic membership, not Southern origin.

2. Many characteristic features of Southern speech have been generalized along strictly ethnic lines in Northern cities. For example, the absence of a distinction between i and , e before nasals [*pin* equal to *pen*] has become a marker of the Negro group in New York City, so that most young Negro children of Northern and Southern background alike show this feature while no white children are affected.

3. In this merger of Northern and Southern patterns in the Northern Negro communities, a great many Southern features are being eliminated. Thus in New York and other Northern cities, we find the young Negro people do not distinguish *four* and *for*, *which* and *witch*; while monophthongization of *high* and *wide* is common, the extreme fronting of the initial vowel to the position of *cat* or near it, is less and less frequent; the back upglide of *ball* and *hawk*, so characteristic of many Southern areas, is rarely heard; grammatical features such as the perfective auxiliary *done* in *he done told me*, or the double modal of *might could*, are becoming increasingly rare. As a result, a speaker fresh from the South is plainly marked in the Northern Negro communities, and his speech is ridiculed. Negro speech is thus not to be identified with Southern regional speech.

4. The white Southern speech which is heard in many Northern cities—Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland—is the Southern Mountain pattern of Appalachia, and this pattern does not have many of the phonological and grammatical features of Negro speech to be discussed below in this paper.

5. Many of the individual features of Negro speech can be found in Northern white speech, as we will see, and even more so in the speech of educated white Southerners. But the frequency of these features, such as consonant cluster simplification, and their distribution in relation to grammatical boundaries, is radically different in Negro speech, and we are forced in many cases to infer the existence of different underlying grammatical forms and rules.

We can sum up this discussion of the Southern regional pattern by saying that we are witnessing the transformation of a regional speech pattern into a class and ethnic pattern in the Northern cities. This is not a new phenomenon; it has occurred many times in the history of English. According to H. Kökeritz and H. C. Wyld, such a process was taking place in Shakespeare's London, where regional dialects from the east and southeast opposed more conservative dialects within the city as middle class and lower class speech against aristocratic speech.[6] We see the same process operating today in the suburbs of New York City; where the Connecticut and New Jersey patterns meet the New York City pattern, in the overlapping areas, the New York City pattern becomes associated with lower socioeconomic groups.[7]

The existence of a Negro speech pattern must not be confused of course with the myth of a biologically, racially, exclusively Negro speech. The idea that dialect differences are due to some form of laziness or carelessness must be rejected with equal firmness. Anyone who continues to endorse such myths can be refuted easily by such subjective reaction tests as the Family Background test which we are using in our current research in Harlem. Sizable extracts from the speech of fourteen individuals are played in sequence for listeners who are asked to identify the family backgrounds of each.[8] So far, we find no one who can even come close to a correct identification of Negro and white speakers. This result does not contradict the statement that there exists a socially based Negro speech pattern: it supports everything that I have said above on this point. The voices heard on the test are the exceptional cases: Negroes raised without any Negro friends in solidly white areas; whites raised in areas dominated by Negro cultural values; white Southerners in Gullah-speaking territory; Negroes from small Northern communities untouched by recent migrations: college educated Negroes who reject the Northern ghetto and the South alike. The speech of these individuals does not identify them as Negro or white because they do not use the speech patterns which are characteristically Negro or white for Northern listeners. The identifications made by these listeners, often in

violation of actual ethnic membership categories, show that they respond to Negro speech patterns as a social reality.

### Relevant Patterns of Negro Speech

One approach to the study of nonstandard Negro speech is to attempt a complete description of this form of language without direct reference to standard English. This approach can be quite revealing, and can save us from many pitfalls in the easy identification of forms that are only apparently similar. But as an overall plan, it is not realistic. We are far from achieving a complete description of standard English, to begin with; the differences between nonstandard Negro speech and standard English are slight compared to their similarities; and finally, some of these differences are far more relevant to reading problems than others. Let us therefore consider some of the most relevant patterns of Negro speech from the point of view of reading problems.

Some Negro-white differences are plainly marked and easy for any observer to note. In the following examples, the Negro forms are patterns which frequently occur in our recordings of individual and group sessions with boys from 10 to 17 years old—ranging from careful speech in face-to-face interaction with adults to the most excited and spontaneous activity within the primary (closed network) group:[9]

| *Negro* | *White* |
|---|---|
| It don't all be her fault. | It isn't always her fault. |
| Hit him upside the head. | Hit him in the head. |
| The rock say "Shhh!" | The rock went "Shhh!" |
| I'm a shoot you. | I'm g'na shoot you. |
| I wanna be a police. | I wanna be a policeman. |
| Ah 'on' know. [$a^2 o^4 no^3$] | I d'know. [$a^1 dno^3 \upsilon^1$] |

Now consider the following examples, in which Negro-white differences are less plainly marked and very difficult for most people to hear:

| *Negro* | *White* |
|---|---|
| He [pæsɪm] yesterday. | He [pæsd ɪm] yesterday. |
| Give him [ðeᴛ] book. | Give him [ðɛ ɹ] book. |
| This [jɔːɤ] place? | This [jɔːə] place? |
| [ðæs] Nick boy. | [ðæts] Nick's boy. |
| He say, [kæːəl] is. | He says, [kærəl] is. |
| My name is [bu]. | My name is [bu?] |

This second series represents a set of slight phonetic differences, sometimes prominent, but more often unnoticed by the casual listener. These

differences are much more significant than the first set in terms of learning and reading standard English. In truth, the differences are so significant that they will be the focus of attention in the balance of this paper. The slight phonetic signals observed here indicate systematic differences that can lead to reading problems and problems of being understood.

Corresponding to the phonetic transcriptions on the left, we can and do infer such grammatical constructions and lexical forms as:

> He pass him yesterday.
> Give him they book.
> This you-all place?
> That's Nick boy.
> He say, Ca'ol is.
> My name is Boo.

Each of these sentences is representative of a large class of phonological and grammatical differences which mark nonstandard Negro speech as against standard English. The most important are those in which large scale phonological differences coincide with important grammatical differences. The result of this coincidence is the existence of a large number of homonyms in the speech of Negro children which are different from the set of homonyms in the speech system used by the teacher. If the teacher knows about this different set of homonyms, no serious problems in the teaching of reading need occur; but if the teacher does not know, there are bound to be difficulties.

The simplest way to organize this information seems to be under the headings of the important rules of the sound system which are affected. By using lists of homonyms as examples, it will be possible to avoid a great deal of phonetic notation, and to stay with the essential linguistic facts. In many cases, the actual phonetic form is irrelevant: it is the presence or absence of a distinction which is relevant. Thus, for example, it makes no differences whether a child says [pɪn] or [pɪən] or [peːʔn] or [pɛn] for the word *pen*; what counts is whether or not this word is distinct from *pin*. The linguistic fact of interest is the existence of contrast, not the particular phonetic forms that are heard from one moment to another. A child might seem to distinguish [pɪn] and [pɛn] in Northern style in one pair of sentences, but if the basic phonemic contrast is not present, the same child might reverse the forms in the next sentence, and say [pɪn] for *ink pen* and [pɛn] for *safety pin*. A linguistic orientation will not supply teachers with a battery of phonetic symbols, but rather encourage them to observe what words can or cannot be distinguished by the children they are teaching.

**Some Phonological Variables and Their Grammatical Consequences**

1. *r-lessness.* There are three major dialect areas in the Eastern United States where the *r* of spelling is not pronounced as a consonant before other consonants or at the ends of words: Eastern New England, New York City, and the South (Upper and Lower). Thus speakers from Boston, New York, Richmond, Charleston, or Atlanta will show only a lengthened vowel in *car, guard, for,* etc., and usually an obscure centering glide [schwa] in place of *r* in *fear, feared, care, cared, moor, moored, bore, bored,* etc. This is what we mean by *r*-less pronunciation. Most of these areas have been strongly influenced in recent years by the *r*-pronouncing pattern which is predominant in broadcasting, so that educated speakers, especially young people, will show a mixed pattern in their careful speech.[10] When the original *r*-less pattern is preserved, we can obtain such homonyms as the following:[11]

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| guard | = god | par | = pa |
| nor | = gnaw | fort | = fought |
| sore | = saw | court | = caught |

and we find that *yeah* can rhyme with *fair,* *idea* with *fear.*

Negro speakers show an even higher degree of *r*-lessness than New Yorkers or Bostonians. The *r* of spelling becomes a schwa or disappears before vowels as well as before consonants or pauses. Thus in the speech of most white New Yorkers, *r* is pronounced when a vowel follows in *four o'clock;* even though the *r* is found at the end of a word, if the next word begins with a vowel, it is pronounced as a consonantal [r]. For most Negro speakers, *r* is still not pronounced in this position, and so never heard at the end of the word *four.* The white speaker is helped in his reading or spelling by the existence of the alternation: [fɔːfiːt, fɔrəklak], but the Negro speaker has no such clue to the underlying (spelling) form of the word *four.* Furthermore, the same Negro speaker will often not pronounce intervocalic *r* in the middle of a word, as indicated in the dialect spelling *inte'ested, Ca'ol.* He has no clue, in his own speech, to the correct spelling form of such words, and may have another set of homonyms besides those listed above:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Carol | = | Cal |
| Paris | = | pass |
| terrace | = | test |

2. *l-lessness.* The consonant *l* is a liquid very similar to *r* in its phonetic nature. The chief difference is that with *l* the center of the tongue is up, and the sides are down, while with *r* the sides are up but the center does

not touch the roof of the mouth. The pattern of *l*-dropping is very similar to that of *r*, except that it has never affected entire dialect areas in the same sweeping style.[12] When *l* disappears, it is often replaced by a back unrounded glide, sometimes symbolized [ɤ], instead of the center glide that replaces *r*; in many cases, *l* disappears entirely, especially after the back rounded vowels. The loss of *l* is much more marked among the Negro speakers we have interviewed than among whites in Northern cities, and we therefore have much greater tendencies towards such homonyms as:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| toll | = toe | all | = awe |
| help | = hep | Saul | = saw |
| tool | = too | fault | = fought |

3. *Simplification of consonant clusters.* One of the most complex variables appearing in Negro speech is the general tendency towards the simplification of consonant clusters at the ends of words. A great many clusters are involved, primarily those which end in /t/ or /d/, /s/ or /z/.[13] We are actually dealing with two distinct tendencies: (1) a general tendency to reduce clusters of consonants at the ends of words to single consonants, and (2) a more general process of reducing the amount of information provided after stressed vowels, so that individual final consonants are affected as well. The first process is the most regular and requires the most intensive study in order to understand the conditioning factors involved.

The chief /t,d/ clusters that are affected are (roughly in order of frequency) /-st, -ft, -nt, -nd, -ld, -zd, -md/. Here they are given in phonemic notation; in conventional spelling we have words such as *past, passed, lift, laughed, bent, bend, fined, hold, poled, old, called, raised, aimed.* In all these cases, if the cluster is simplified, it is the last element that is dropped. Thus we have homonyms such as:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| past | = pass | mend | = men |
| rift | = riff | wind | = wine |
| meant | = men | hold | = hole |

If we combine the effect of *-ld* simplification, loss of *-l*, and monophthongization of /ay/ and /aw/, we obtain

[ʃi waːɤ ]          She wow!   =   She wild!

and this equivalence has in fact been found in our data. It is important to bear in mind that the combined effect of several rules will add to the total number of homonyms, and even more, to the unexpected character of the final result:

told   =   toll   =   toe

The first impression that we draw, from casual listening, is that Negro speakers show much more consonant cluster simplification than white speakers. But this conclusion is far from obvious when we examine the data carefully. Table 1 shows the total simplification of consonant clusters for two speakers: BF is a Negro working class man, 45 years old, raised in New York City; AO is a white working class man, of Austrian-German background, 56 years old, also raised in New York City but with little contact with Negroes.

<div align="center">

**Table 1**

**OVER-ALL SIMPLIFICATION OF /t,d/ CONSONANT CLUSTERS FOR ONE NEGRO AND ONE WHITE NEW YORK CITY SPEAKER**

</div>

| | BF (Negro) | | AO (White) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number Simplified | Total Clusters | Number Simplified | Total Clusters |
| /–st/ | 29 | 37 | 18 | 23 |
| /–ft/ | 7 | 9 | 0 | 2 |
| /–nt/ | 8 | 16 | 14 | 29 |
| /–nd/ | 8 | 14 | 8 | 14 |
| /–ld/ | 8 | 15 | 2 | 4 |
| /–zd/ | 5 | 8 | 3 | 4 |
| /–md/ | 2 | 3 | 0 | 1 |
| other | 4 | 4 | 1 | 4 |
| TOTAL | 71 | 106 | 46 | 81 |

The over-all percentage of simplification for BF is 67 percent, not very much more than AO, 57 percent. Furthermore, the individual clusters show remarkably similar patterns; for the larger cells, the percentages are almost identical. It is true that the social distribution of this feature is wider for Negroes than for whites, but the sharpest differences are not in this particular phonetic process. As we shall see below, it is in the nature of the grammatical conditioning that restricts the deletion of the final consonant.

The other set of clusters which are simplified are those ending in /-s/ or /-z/, words like *axe* /æks/, *six* /siks/, *box* /baks/, *parts* /parts/, *aims* /eymz/, *rolls* /rowlz/, *leads* /liydz/, *besides* /bisaydz/, *John's* /dʒanz/, *that's* /ðæts/, *it's* /its/, *its* /its/. The situation here is more complex than with the /t,d/ clusters, since in some cases the first element of the cluster is lost, and in other cases the second element.[14] Furthermore, the comparison of the same two speakers as shown above shows a radical difference:

## Table 2
### OVER-ALL SIMPLIFICATION OF /s,z/ CLUSTERS FOR ONE NEGRO AND ONE WHITE NEW YORK CITY SPEAKER

| BF (Negro) | | | AO (White) | | |
| 1st Cons. Dropped | 2nd Cons. Dropped | Total Clusters | 1st Cons. Dropped | 2nd Cons. Dropped | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 31 | 18 | 98 | 6 | 4 | 69 |

This over-all view of the situation is only a preliminary to a much more detailed study, but it does serve to show that the simplification of the /s,z/ clusters is much more characteristic of Negro speakers than of white speakers. The comparison of these two speakers is typical of the several hundred Negro and white subjects that we have studied so far in our current research.

In one sense, there are a great many homonyms produced by this form of consonant cluster simplification, as we shall see when we consider grammatical consequences. But many of these can also be considered to be grammatical differences rather than changes in the shapes of words. The /t,d/ simplification gives us a great many irreducible homonyms, where a child has no clue to the standard spelling differences from his own speech pattern. Though this is less common in the case of /s,z/ clusters, we have

| | |
|---|---|
| six = sick | Max = Mack |
| box = bock | mix = Mick |

as possible homonyms in the speech of many Negro children.

4. *Weakening of final consonants.* It was noted above that the simplification of final consonant clusters was part of a more general tendency to produce less information after stressed vowels, so that final consonants, unstressed final vowels, and weak syllables show fewer distinctions and more reduced phonetic forms than initial consonants and stressed vowels. This is a perfectly natural process in terms of the amount of information required for effective communication, since the number of possible words which must be distinguished declines sharply after we select the first consonant and vowel. German and Russian, for example, do not distinguish voiced and voiceless consonants at the ends of words. However, when this tendency is carried to extremes (and a nonstandard dialect differs radically from the standard language in this respect), it may produce serious problems in learning to read and spell.

This weakening of final consonants is by no means as regular as the

other phonological variables described above. Some individuals appear to have generalized the process to the point where most of their syllables are of the CV type, and those we have interviewed in this category seem to have the most serious reading problems of all. In general, final /t/ and /d/ are the most affected by the process. Final /d, may be devoiced to a [t]-like form, or disappear entirely. Final /t./ is often realized as glottal stop, as in many English dialects, but more often disappears entirely. Less often, final /g/ and /k./ follow the same route as /d./ and /t/: /g/ is devoiced or disappears, and /k/ is replaced by glottal stop or disappears. Final /m/ and /n./ usually remain in the form of various degrees of nasalization of the preceding vowel. Rarely, sibilants /s/ and /z./ are weakened after vowels to the point where no consonant is heard at all. As a result of these processes, one may have such homonyms as:

| Boot = Boo[15] | seat = seed = see |
| road = row | poor = poke = pope[16] |
| feed = feet | bit = bid = big |

It is evident that the loss of final /l./ and /r/, discussed above, is another aspect of this general weakening of final consonants, though of a much more regular nature than the cases considered in this section.

5. *Other phonological variables.* In addition to the types of homonymy singled out in the preceding discussion, there are a great many others which may be mentioned. They are of less importance for reading problems in general, since they have little impact upon inflectional rules, but they do affect the shapes of words in the speech of Negro children. There is no distinction between /i./ and /e./ before nasals in the great majority of cases. In the parallel case before /r/, and sometimes /l/, we frequently find no distinction between the vowels /ih/ and /eh./. The corresponding pair of back vowels before /r/ are seldom distinguished: that is, /uh/ and /oh/ fall together. The diphthongs /ay/ and /aw,/ are often monophthongized, so that they are not distinguished from /ah/. The diphthong /oy/ is often a monophthong, especially before /l/, and cannot be distinguished from /ɔh/.

Among other consonant variables, we find the final fricative /θ/ is frequently merged with /f/, and similarly final /ð/ with /v/. Less frequently, /θ/ and /ð/ become /f/ and /v/ in intervocalic position. Initial consonant clusters which involve /r/ show considerable variation: /str/ is often heard as /skr/; /ʃr/ as [sw, sr, sɸ]. In a more complex series of shifts, /r/ is frequently lost as the final element of an initial cluster.

As a result of these various phonological processes, we find that the

following series of homonyms are characteristic of the speech of many Negro children:

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| pin | = pen | beer | = bear | poor | = pour |
| tin | = ten | cheer | = chair | sure | = shore |
| since | = cents | steer | = stair | moor | = more |
| | | peel | = pail | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| find | = found | = fond | | boil | = ball |
| time | | = Tom | | oil | = all |
| | pound | = pond | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ruth | = roof | stream | = scream |
| death | = deaf | strap | = scrap |

## Changes in the Shapes of Words

The series of potential homonyms given in the preceding sections indicate that Negro children may have difficulty in recognizing many words in their standard spellings. They may look up words under the wrong spellings in dictionaries, and be unable to distinguish words which are plainly different for the teacher. If the teacher is aware of these sources of confusion, he may be able to anticipate a great many of the children's difficulties. But if neither the teacher nor the children are aware of the great differences in their sets of homonyms, it is obvious that confusion will occur in every reading assignment.

However, the existence of homonyms on the level of a phonetic output does not prove that the speakers have the same sets of mergers on the more abstract level which corresponds to the spelling system. For instance, many New Yorkers merge *guard* and *god* in casual speech, but in reading style, they have no difficulty in pronouncing the /r/ where it belongs. Since the /r/ in *car* reappears before a following vowel, it is evident that an abstract //r//[17] occurs in their lexical system: //kar//. Thus the standard spelling system finds support in the learned patterns of careful speech, and in the alternations which exist within any given style of speech.

The phonetic processes discussed above are often considered to be "low level" rules—that is, they do not affect the underlying or abstract representations of words. One piece of evidence for this view is that the deletable final /r, l, s, z, t, d/ tend to be retained when a vowel follows at the beginning of the next word. This effect of a following vowel would seem to be a phonetic factor, restricting the operation of a phonetic rule; in any case, it is plain that the final consonant must "be there" in some abstract sense, if it appears in this prevocalic position. If this were not

the case, we would find a variety of odd final consonants appearing, with no fixed relation to the standard form.[18]

For all of the major variables that we have considered, there is a definite and pronounced effect of a following vowel in realizing the standard form. Figure 1 shows the effect of a following vowel on final /-st/ in the speech of four Negro and three white subjects. In every case, we find that the percent of simplification of the cluster falls when a vowel follows.

Figure 1

EFFECT OF A FOLLOWING VOWEL ON /–st/ FINAL CLUSTERS FOR FOUR NEGRO AND THREE WHITE SPEAKERS
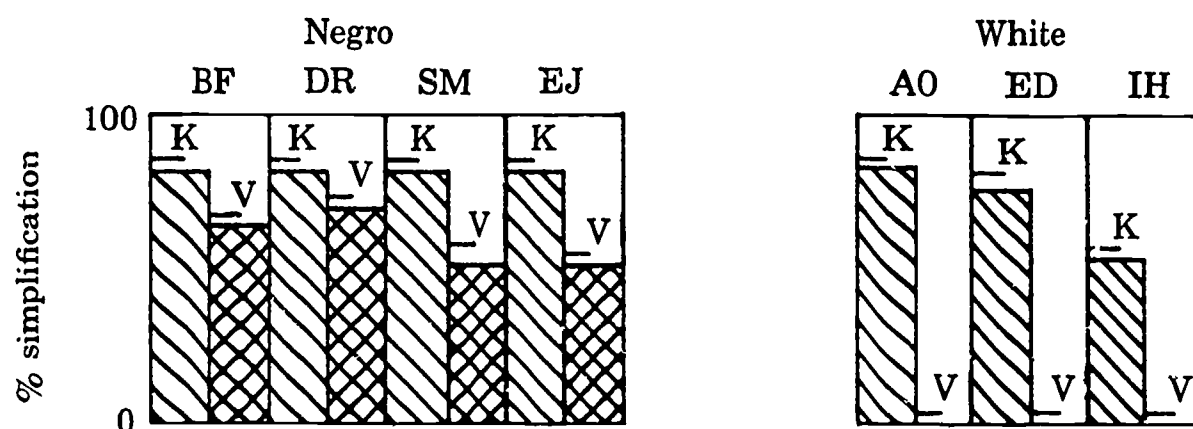


The same argument, however, can be applied to show that the Negro speakers have underlying forms considerably different from those of white speakers. The white speakers showed almost as much overall simplification of the clusters before a following consonant, but none at all before a following vowel: in other words, their abstract forms were effectively equivalent to the spelling forms. The Negro speakers showed only a limited reduction in the degree of simplification when a vowel followed.

We can explore this situation more carefully when we consider grammatical conditioning. But we can point to one situation which proves the existence of nonstandard underlying forms quite clearly. In the most casual and spontaneous speech of the young Negro people whose language we have been examining, the plural //-s// inflection is seldom deleted. It follows the same phonetic rules as in standard English: (1) after sibilants /s, z, ʃ, ʒ/, the regular plural is [ɨz]; (2) after other voiceless consonants, [s]; and (3) elsewhere, [z]. The regular form of the plural after a word like *test, desk*, is [s], as in [tests]. If the rules were so ordered that we began with the abstract form //test//, added the //-s//, and then deleted the /t/ in the consonant cluster simplification process, we would find the

final phonetic form [tɛs:]. We do in fact sometimes find this form, in a context which implies the plural. But more often, we find [tɛsɪz], [gosɪz], [tosɪz], as the plurals of *test, ghost,* and *toast.*

A form such as [tesɪz] implies an order of the rules which begins with //tes//, or reduces //test// immediately to /tes/. Then the plural //-s// is added, and the phonetic rules give us [tɛsɪz]. It should be emphasized that those speakers who use this form do so consistently, frequently, and in the most careful speech; it is not a mere slip of the tongue. Furthermore, there is little reason in this case to presuppose a //test// form at all. The phonetic rules for //-s// are fairly "high level" rules, which affect all //-s// suffixes, and precede many other rules. For example, we find as noted above that /-ts/ is frequently simplified to /-s/ in the speech of Negroes and whites. When this /-s/ represents the plural, as in *lots of trouble,* it does not shift to [z]: we do not get the form [lazə], but rather [lasə]. In other words, the phonetic rules for the //-s// form apply first, then the /-t-/ is deleted, and the //-s// rules do not apply again.

We can conclude from this and other data that those children who use forms such as [tɛsɪz] have underlying lexical forms which are different from the spelling forms, and they would have no reason to expect to find *test* spelled T-E-S-T.

### Grammatical Correlates of the Phonological Variables

As we examine the various final consonants affected by the phonological processes, we find that these are the same consonants which represent the principal English inflections. The shifts in the sound system therefore often coincide with grammatical differences between nonstandard and standard English, and it is usually difficult to decide whether we are dealing with a grammatical or a phonological rule. In any case, we can add a great number of homonyms to the lists given above when we consider the consequences of deleting final /r/, /l/, /s/, /z/, /t/, and /d/.

1. *The possessive.* In many cases, the absence of the possessive //-s// can be interpreted as a reduction of consonant clusters, although this is not the most likely interpretation. The //-s// is absent just as frequently after vowels as after consonants for many speakers. Nevertheless, we can say that the overall simplification pattern is favored by the absence of the //-s// inflection. In the case of //-r//, we find more direct phono-

logical influence: two possessive pronouns which end in /r/ have become identical to the personal pronoun:

<center>[ðeɪ] book      not      [ðɛ:ə] book</center>

In rapid speech, one can not distinguish *you* from *your* from *you-all*. This seems to be a shift in grammatical forms, but the relation to the phonological variables is plain when we consider that *my*, *his*, *her*, and *our* remain as possessive pronouns. No one says *I book, he book, she book* or *we book*, for there is no phonological process which would bring the possessives into near-identity with the personal pronouns.[19]

2. *The future.* The loss of final /l/ has a serious effect on the realization of future forms:

<center>

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| you'll | = you | he'll | = he |
| they'll | = they | she'll | = she |

</center>

In many cases, therefore, the colloquial future is identical with the colloquial present. The form *will* is still used in its emphatic or full form, and the *going to* is frequent, so there is no question about the grammatical category of the future.[20] One form of the future with very slight phonetic substance is preserved, the first person *I'm a shoot you*: there is no general process for the deletion of this *m*.

3. *The copula.* The verb forms of *be* are frequently not realized in sentences such as *you tired* or *he in the way*. If we examine the paradigm, we find that it is seriously affected by phonological processes:

<center>

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| I'm | ≠ I | we're | = we |
| you're | ≃ you | you're | ≃ you |
| he's | ? he | they're | = they |

</center>

The loss of final /z/ after vowels is not so frequent as to explain the frequency of the absence of -*s* in *he's*, and it is reasonable to conclude that grammatical rules have been generalized throughout the paradigm—still not affecting *I'm* in the same way as the others, as we would expect, since phonological rules are not operating to reduce /m/.

4. *The past.* Again, there is no doubt that phonological processes are active in reducing the frequency of occurrence of the /t,d/ inflection.

<center>

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| pass | = past | = passed | pick | = picked |
| miss | = mist | = missed | loan | = loaned |
| fine | = find | = fined | raise | = raised |

</center>

At the same time, there is no question about the existence of a past tense category. The irregular past tense forms, which are very frequent

in ordinary conversation, are plainly marked as past no matter what final simplification takes place.

I told him     [atoɪm]        he kept mine   [hikɛpma'n]

The problem which confronts us concerns the form of the regular suffix //-ed//. Is there such an abstract form in the structure of the nonstandard English spoken by Negro children? The answer will make a considerable difference both to teaching strategy and our understanding of the reading problems which children face. To approach this problem, we have used a variety of methods which it may be helpful to examine in detail.

### The Problem of the -ed Suffix

The first approach to this problem is through a study of the quantitative distribution of the forms as spoken by Negro and white subjects in a variety of stylistic contexts. We contrast the simplification of consonant clusters in two situations: where the /t/ or /d/ represents a part of the root form itself [$D_{MM}$] and where the /t/ or /d/ represents the grammatical suffix of the past tense [$D_P$]. Figure 2 shows the results for the speakers BF and AO who were first considered in Tables 1 and 2.

The Negro speaker BF shows almost the same degree of consonant cluster simplification when the /t,d/ represents a past tense as when it is a part of the original root. On the other hand, the white speaker AO simplifies very few past tense clusters. We can interpret these results in two ways: (a) BF has a generalized simplification rule without grammatical conditioning, while AO's simplification rule is strongly restricted by grammatical boundaries, or (b) BF's underlying grammar is different. If we were to rewrite his grammar to show -ed morphemes only where phonetic forms actually appear, his consonant cluster rule would look much the same as AO's. Without attempting to decide this issue now, let us examine a Negro speaker in several styles, and see if the -ed is affected by the shift.

Figure 3 shows the percent of /t,d/ clusters simplified by DR, a Negro woman raised in North Carolina. On the left, we see the simplification of both $D_{MM}$ and $D_P$ in intimate family style, discussing a recent trip to North Carolina with a close relative. The pattern is similar to that of BF, with no differentiation of $D_{MM}$ and $D_P$. But on the right we find a sharp differentiation of the two kinds of clusters: this is the careful style used by DR in a face-to-face interview with a white stranger. Figure 3

Figure 2
EFFECT OF GRAMMATICAL STATUS ON /t,d/ OF
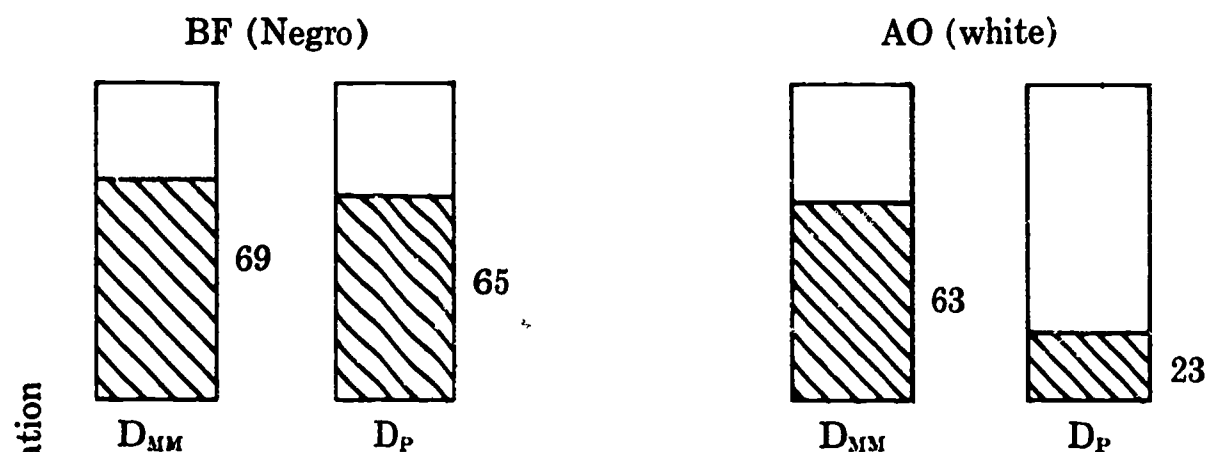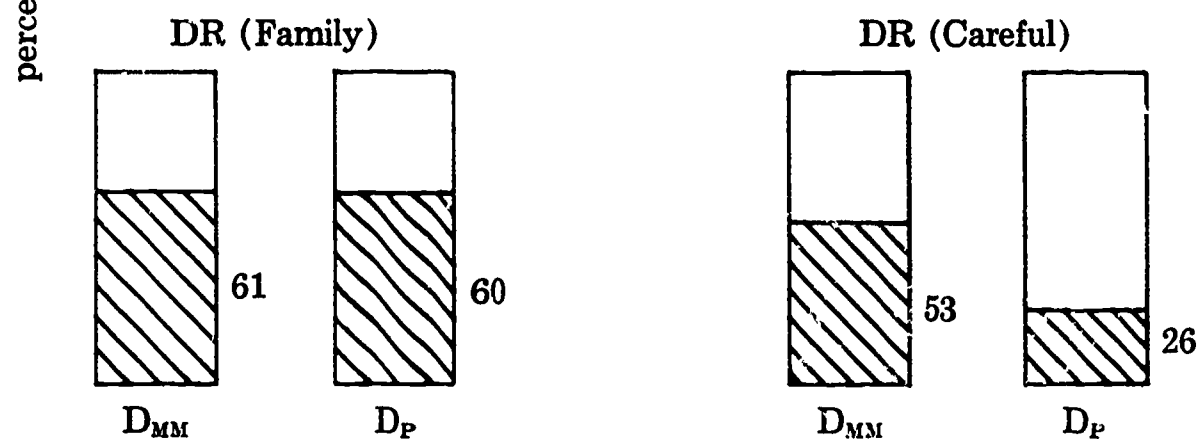FINAL CLUSTERS FOR ONE NEGRO AND ONE WHITE SPEAKER

BF (Negro)　　　　　　　　AO (white)

$D_{MM}$　69　　$D_P$　65　　　　$D_{MM}$　63　　$D_P$　23

percent simplification

Figure 3

EFFECT OF STYLISTIC LEVEL AND GRAMMATICAL STATUS
ON /t,d/ OF FINAL CLUSTERS FOR ONE NEGRO SPEAKER

DR (Family)　　　　　　　　DR (Careful)

$D_{MM}$　61　　$D_P$　60　　　　$D_{MM}$　53　　$D_P$　26

$D_{MM}$: /t,d/final in monomorphemic (root) clusters
$D_P$　: /t,d/final as past tense -ed morpheme

shows us that the grammatical constraint which DR uses in careful
speech is quite similar to the pattern used by the white speaker AO.

Stylistic context is obviously important in obtaining good information
on the underlying grammatical system of Negro speakers. We may there-
fore profit from considering data where this factor is controlled. Figure
4 shows the overall consonant cluster simplification patterns for two
groups of Negro boys: the Thunderbirds, 10 to 12 years old, and the
Cobras, 14 to 16. These are two peer groups which form closed networks.
Most of the boys are poor readers, and they represent the groups which

Figure 4

## SIMPLIFICATION OF /t,d/ AND /s,z,/ FINAL CLUSTERS FOR TWO GROUPS OF NEGRO BOYS FROM SOUTH CENTRAL HARLEM

Thunderbirds (five boys, age 10–12)
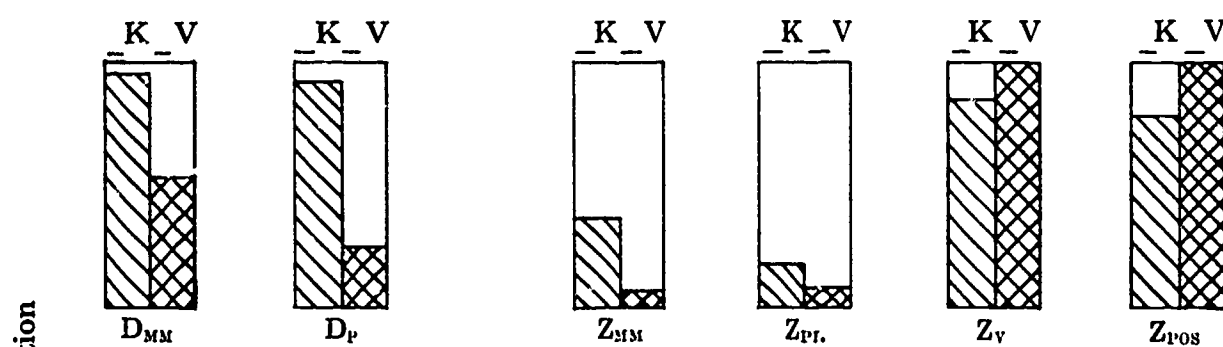
Cobras (four boys, age 14–16)

$D_{MM}$: /t,d/ final in monomorphemic (root) clusters
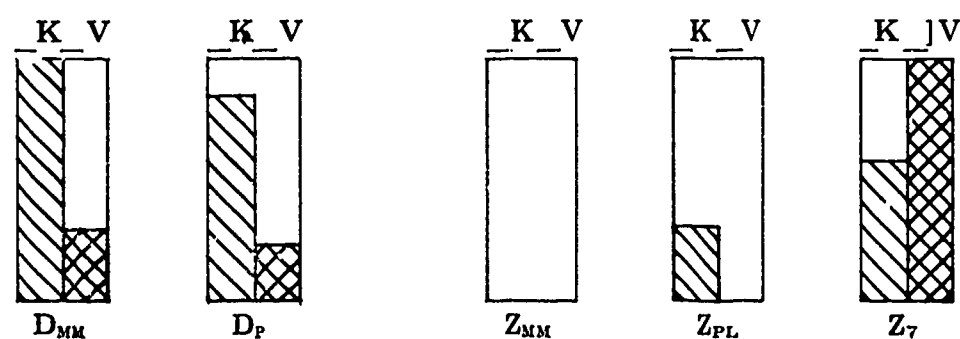$D_P$: /t,d/ final as past tense –*ed* morpheme
$Z_{MM}$: /s,z/ final in monomorphemic (root) clusters
$Z_{PL}$: /s,z/ final as plural morpheme
$Z_V$: /s,z/ final as 3rd person singular marker
$Z_{POS}$: /s,z/ final as possessive morpheme

respond least to middle class educational norms. In the interviews which provided this data, the groups were recorded in circumstances where they used the most excited and spontaneous speech, interacting with each other, and with only moderate influence from outsiders. Each boy was recorded on a separate track, from a microphone placed only a few inches away from his mouth. (Recordings made with a single group microphone are of little value for this type of group interaction since only a small part of the data is recovered.)

The Thunderbirds show a very high percentage of simplification of clusters before consonants: 61 out of 63 for nongrammatical clusters, and 21 out of 23 for grammatical clusters. But before following vowels, only 7 out of 14 nongrammatical clusters were simplified, and even fewer—3 out of 13—for grammatical clusters.

We can conclude from these figures that there is a solid basis for the recognition of an *-ed* suffix: grammatical status does make a difference when the unfavorable phonological environment is set aside. Secondly, we can see that there is a good basis for approximating the lexical forms of standard English: 50 percent of the root clusters conformed to the standard forms in a favorable environment. From another point of view, however, one might say that in half the cases, the boys gave no evidence that they would recognize such spellings as *test* or *hand* as corresponding to their [tɛs] and [hæn].

The Cobras, some four years older, are very similar in their /t,d/ pattern. The phonological conditioning has become even more regular—that is, the effect of the following vowel is more extreme. All of the root clusters are simplified before consonants, but only a small percentage before vowels. The effect of grammatical status is no stronger, however. We may conclude that the process of growing up has brought better knowledge of the underlying lexical forms of standard English, but the status of the *-ed* morpheme is still about the same.

*Perception testing.* A second approach to the problem of the *-ed* suffix is through perception testing. It is possible that the speakers are not able to hear the difference between [pɪk] and [pɪkt], [mɛs] and [mɛst]. If the phonological reduction rule was regular enough, this might be the case. We explore this possibility by a perception test of the following form. The subject listens to a series of three words: [mɛs, mɛst, mɛs], and is asked to say which one is different. The test is repeated six times, with various random combinations of the two possibilities. Then a second series is given with /-st/ before a vowel: [mɛsʌp, mɛstʌp, mɛsʌp], etc. A person who can hear the distinctions will give a correct response in six out of six, or five out of six trials.

The Thunderbirds had no difficulty with the perception test. Three of the boys had perfect scores, and only one showed definite confusion—in fact, the one boy who came closest to standard English norms on the other tests described below. It is true that many Negro youngsters have great difficulty in perceiving phonemic contrasts which are not made in their own dialect; but in this particular case, perception of the /-t~-st/

distinction has less relevance to the grammatical status of *-ed* than any of the other means of investigation.

*Classroom correction tests.* A third means of approaching the grammatical status of *-ed* is through the classroom correction tests mentioned earlier in the discussion. The subjects are asked to change certain sentences to correct schoolroom English, starting with easy examples like *I met three mens.* Several sentences are relevant to the *-ed* problem:

> He pick me.
> I've pass my test.
> Last week I kick Donald in the mouth, so the
>       teacher throwed me out the class.

As a whole, results on the classroom correction tests show that the Thunderbirds and the Cobras have little ability to detect the absence of *-ed* as a grammatical element to be corrected. They focus upon *ain't*, or *man* in *He never play no more, man,* but not upon the *-ed.* Among the Thunderbirds, only one of the five boys had this ability to supply *-ed,* and the Cobras showed no greater perception of the status of this element."[21]

*The -ed reading test.* The most effective way of determining the grammatical significance of *-ed* for the groups we have been working with is through a series of sentences in the reading texts used in our interviews. The relevant sentences are as follows:

(a)  Last month I read five books.
(b)  Tom read all the time.
(c)  Now I read and write better than Alfred does.
(d)  When I passed by, I read the posters.
(e)  When I liked a story, I read every word.
(f)  I looked for trouble when I read the news.

These sentences depend upon the unique homograph *read* to indicate whether the reader is interpreting the *-ed* suffix as a past tense signal. The first three sentences show whether the reader can use the time indicators *last month, now,* and the absence of *-s* to distinguish correctly between [ri:d] and [rɛd]. In sentences (d), (e), and (f) the reader first encounters the *-ed* suffix, which he may or may not pronounce. If he interprets this visual signal as a sign of the past tense, he will pronounce *read* as [rɛd]; if not, he is apt to say [ri:d]. The distance between the *-ed* suffix and the word *read* is kept as short as possible in sentence (d), so that here at least there is no problem of understanding *-ed* and then forgetting it.

The overall results of this test show that *-ed* is interpreted correctly less than half the time by the Thunderbirds—less often than the *-ed*

suffix is pronounced. The Cobras show no material improvement in this respect. For each group, only one boy was able to approximate the standard English performance in this test.

We can conclude that the original inferences drawn from Figure 4, based on linguistic performance in spontaneous speech, are supported by various other approaches to the *-ed* problem. The degree of uncertainty registered in the $D_P$ column for consonant clusters, even before vowels, indicates that the *-ed* cannot function as an effective marker of the past tense for many children. Though the Cobras are four years older than the Thunderbirds, they show little change in their use of *-ed*. It is also true that some children—a minority in this case—can recognize *-ed* as a past tense marker, and use it effectively in reading, even though they usually do not pronounce it.

### Grammatical Status of the //-s// Suffixes

The same quantitative method which was effective in interpreting the status of *-ed* can be used to analyze the various *-s* suffixes used by Negro children. Figure 4 provides information on consonant cluster simplification as it affects four different categories of *-s*:[22]

> $Z_{MM}$   monomorphemic *-s* in root clusters: *axe, box*
> $Z_{PL}$    the plural *-s*
> $Z_V$     the 3rd person singular marker of the verb
> $Z_{POS}$   the possessive *-'s*

For each category, we can compare the extent of simplification before consonants and before vowels.

In the case of root clusters, the Thunderbirds show only a moderate tendency to drop the final element before consonants, and a very small tendency before vowels. In other words, the standard forms are intact. For the Cobras, this *-s* is always present.

The plural is rarely lost, and shows the usual effect of the following vowel. We can conclude that the plural inflection is the same for the Thunderbirds, the Cobras, and standard English.

In the case of the third person singular marker and the possessive, an extraordinary reversal is found. For the Thunderbirds, the situation can be summarized as follows:

| $Z_V$ | -K | -V |
|---|---|---|
| simplified | 17 | 12 |
| not simplified | 4 | 0 |

Not only is the extent of simplification higher in $Z_V$ than for $Z_{PL}$, but the direction of influence of a following vowel is reversed. No clusters at

all appeared in the most favorable environment for the phonological rule. We can infer that this is no longer effectively described as consonant cluster simplification, but rather as a grammatical fact. The third person singular marker //-s// does not exist in the particular grammar being used here. The same argument holds for the possessive //-s// marker, though as noted above, we cannot extend this argument to infer a loss of the possessive in general.

A striking fact about this situation is that the older group has gained in several respects as far as approximation to standard English forms is concerned, but their development has not affected the grammatical status of the third person singular marker.

### Consequences for the Teaching of Reading

Let us consider the problem of teaching a youngster to read who has the general phonological and grammatical characteristics just described. The most immediate way of analyzing his difficulties is through the interpretation of his oral reading. As we have seen, there are many phonological rules which affect his pronunciation, but not necessarily his understanding of the grammatical signals or his grasp of the underlying lexical forms. The two questions are distinct: the relations between grammar and pronunciation are complex, and require careful interpretation.

If a student is given a certain sentence to read, say *He passed by both of them*, he may say [hi pæs baɪ bof ə dem]. The teacher may wish to correct this bad reading, perhaps by saying, "No, it isn't [hi pæs baɪ bof ə dɛm], it's [hi pæst baɪ boθ əv ðɛm]." One difficulty is that these two utterances may sound the same to many children—both the reader and those listening—and they may be utterly confused by the correction. Others may be able to hear the difference, but have no idea of the significance of the extra [t] and the interdental forms of *th-*. The most embarrassing fact is that the boy who first read the sentence may have performed his reading task correctly, and understood the *-ed* suffix just as it was intended. In that case, the teacher's correction is completely beside the point.

We have two distinct cases to consider. In one case, the deviation in reading may be only a difference in pronunciation on the part of a child who has a different set of homonyms from the teacher. Here, correction might be quite unnecessary. In the second case, we may be dealing with a boy who has no concept of *-ed* as a past tense marker, who considers the *-ed* a meaningless set of silent letters. Obviously the correct teaching

strategy would involve distinguishing these two cases, and treating them quite differently.

How such a strategy might be put into practice is a problem that educators may be able to solve by using information provided by linguists. As a linguist, I can suggest several basic principles derived from our work which may be helpful in further curriculum research and application.

1. In the analysis and correction of oral reading, teachers must begin to make the basic distinction between differences in pronunciation and mistakes in reading. Information on the dialect patterns of Negro children should be helpful toward this end.

2. In the early stages of teaching reading and spelling, it may be necessary to spend much more time on the grammatical function of certain inflections, which may have no function in the dialect of some of the children. In the same way, it may be necessary to treat the final elements of certain clusters with the special attention given to silent letters such as b in lamb.

3. A certain amount of attention given to perception training in the first few years of school may be extremely helpful in teaching children to hear and make standard English distinctions. But perception training need not be complete in order to teach children to read. On the contrary, most of the differences between standard and nonstandard English described here can be taken as differences in the sets of homonyms which must be accepted in reading patterns. On the face of it, there is no reason why a person cannot learn to read standard English texts quite well in a nonstandard pronunciation. Eventually, the school may wish to teach the child an alternative system of pronunciation. But the key to the situation in the early grades is for the teacher to know the system of homonyms of nonstandard English, and to know the grammatical differences that separate her own speech from that of the child. The teacher must be prepared to accept the system of homonyms for the moment, if this will advance the basic process of learning to read, but not the grammatical differences. Thus the task of teaching the child to read -ed is clearly that of getting him to recognize the graphic symbols as a marker of the past tense, quite distinct from the task of getting him to say [pæst] for passed.

If the teacher has no understanding of the child's grammar and set of homonyms, she may be arguing with him at cross purposes. Over and over again, the teacher may insist that cold and coal are different, without realizing that the child perceives this as only a difference in meaning, not

in sound. She will not be able to understand why he makes so many odd mistakes in reading, and he will experience only a vague confusion, somehow connected with the ends of words. Eventually, he may stop trying to analyze the shapes of letters that follow the vowel, and guess wildly at each word after he deciphers the first few letters. Or he may lose confidence in the alphabetic principle as a whole, and try to recognize each word as a whole. This loss of confidence seems to occur frequently in the third and fourth grades, and it is characteristic of many children who are effectively nonreaders.

The sources of reading problems discussed in this paper are only a few of the causes of poor reading in the ghetto schools. But they are quite specific and easily isolated. The information provided here may have immediate application in the overall program of improving the teaching of reading to children in these urban areas.

## Notes

[1] The research described here is a part of Cooperative Research Project No. 3091, U. S. Office of Education: "A Preliminary Study of the Structure of English Used by Negro and Puerto Rican Speakers in New York City." For much of the field work and analysis, I am indebted to Paul Cohen, Clarence Robins, John Lewis, Jr., and Joshua Waletzky of the project staff.

[2] See "Stages in the Acquisition of Standard English," in Roger Shuy (ed.), *Social Dialects and Language Learning* (Champaign, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1965), pp. 77–103.

[3] The continuing research discussed here is part of Cooperative Research Project No. 3288, U. S. Office of Education, "A Study of the Non-Standard English of Negro and Puerto Rican Speakers in New York City."

[4] These observations are based upon experience with many teachers of English, Negro and white, at summer reading institutes, conferences on social dialects, principals' conferences, and other meetings where the speech of Negro people in urban ghettos has been discussed.

[5] Many examples o. .is stereotyping process are discussed in William Labov, *The Social Stratification o, English in New York City* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1966).

[6] H. Kökeritz, *Shakespeare's Pronunciation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953); and H. C. Wyld, *A History of Modern Colloquial English* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1920).

[7] Such a phenomenon can be observed in suburban Bergen County, along the boundary of the New York City dialect area. In Closter, N. J., for example, the socioeconomic differentiation of speakers by r-pronunciation seems to be much more extreme than in the city itself: middle class children may pronounce final and preconsonantal /r/ consistently, while working class children will be completely r-less, and this difference is maintained over a wide range of stylistic contexts.

[8] The forms for the Family Background test give the listener a limited choice of ethnic backgrounds: Irish, Afro-American, Spanish, Jewish, German, and Other White. Within each category, one can specify "S" Southern, "N" Northern, or "W" Western.

[9] These data are derived from series of interviews with individuals and groups in South Central Harlem and exploratory interviews in other Northern cities: Boston, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Detroit, and Chicago.

[10] In New York City, the correlation of /r/ and stylistic context follows a very regular pattern, as discussed in *The Social Stratification of English in New York City*, and other references cited above. Negro speakers are especially sensitive to the prestige status of /r/. The systematic shift indicates the importance of controlling the stylistic factor, as well as socioeconomic factors, in gathering data on speech patterns.

[11] In many cases, pairs such as *guard-god, nor-gnaw,* are differentiated by vowel quality. For most Negro speakers in Northern cities, they are identical. Pairs such as *sore-saw* or *court-caught,* which oppose M. E. closed o before *r* to long open o, are differentiated more often by vowel quality, especially among older people. In any case, the lists of homonyms given here and elsewhere are given as examples of possible homonyms illustrative of large classes of words that are frequently identical.

It should be noted that words with mid-central vowels before *r* do not follow the *r*-less patterns discussed here; *r* appears much more frequently in such words as *work, shirt, bird,* even when it is not used after other vowels.

[12] One English dialect which shows systematic *l*-lessness is Cockney, as described in E. Sivertsen, *Cockney Phonology* (Oslo, 1960).

[13] When the /t/ or /d/ represents a grammatical inflection, these consonants are usually automatic alternants of the same abstract form //ed//. Phonetic rules delete the vowel (except after stems ending in /t/ or /d/, and we then have /t/ following voiceless consonants such as /p, s, ʃ, k/ and /d/ in all other cases. In the same way /s/ and /z/ are coupled as voiceless and voiced alternants of the same //s// inflection. But in clusters that are a part of the root, we do not have such automatic alternation.

[14] The loss of the first element—that is, assimilation to the following /s/—is most common in forms where the /s/ represents the verb *is* or the pronoun *us* as in *it's, that's* and *let's*. In none of these cases is there a problem of homonymy, even in the case of *let's* where there is no likelihood of confusion with *less*. This type of simplification will therefore not be considered in any further detail. It should be noted that "simplification" in regard to the loss of final /s/ is merely a device for presenting the data: as we will see, there are several cases where we are forced to conclude that the /s/ is not there to begin with.

[15] This homonym was troublesome to us for some time. One member of the Thunder-birds is known as "Boo." We did not notice the occasional glottal stop which ended this word as a functional unit for some time; eventually we began to suspect that the underlying form was "Boot." This was finally confirmed when he appeared in sneakers labeled BOOT.

[16] The word *poor* is frequently pronounced with a mid-vowel [po] even by those who do not have a complete merger of such pairs as *sure-shore, moor-more.* One of our Gullah-influenced South Carolina informants on Saint Helena Island is named Samuel Pope or Polk, but we cannot determine which from his pronunciation.

[17] The // // notation encloses morphophonemic forms—that is, forms of words which are the most abstract representation underlying the variants that occur in particular environments as determined by some regular process. English spelling is, on the whole, morphophonemic rather than phonemic: the stem *academ-*, for example, is spelled the same way even though it is pronounced very differently in *academy, academic, academe* and *academician.*

[18] This is precisely what does happen when final consonants are lost in words that have no spelling forms, no correlates in careful speech, and no regular morphophonemic alternation. Terms used in preadolescent culture will occur with a profusion of such variants (which may be continued in the adolescent years). For example, in Chicago the term for the base used in team versions of Hide-and-Seek is the *goose.* This is derived from the more general term gu:l with loss of final /l/—a dialect form of *goal.* (Cf. the alternation *Gould* and *Gold* in proper names.) A similar phenomenon occurs in New York City, where the same item is known as the *dent*—related to older *den.* It is worth noting that both of these cases are characteristic of language change among the Negro speakers we are discussing, and illustrate the unchecked consequences of the homonymy we are considering. A more extreme case may be cited: in one group of teenage Negro boys, the position known elsewhere as *War Lord* (the member who

arranges the details for gang fights) has shifted to a term with the underlying form //war dorf//, or possibly //waldorf// or //ward f//.

[19] In the Creole-based English of Trinidad, however, we do find regularly the forms *he book, she book,* etc. The grammatical differences between Trinidadian English and standard English are therefore much greater than those between nonstandard American Negro English and standard English. In the same way, we find the past tense irregular forms preserved in the dialects we are studying, but only the unmarked stem *he give, he tell* in Trinidad. See D. Solomon, "The System of Predication in the Speech of Trinidad," Columbia University Master's Essay, 1966.

[20] Given this situation, it is evident that more colloquial reading texts with contracted forms *he'll* and *you'll* will not be easy for Negro children to read. The traditional uncontracted *he will* and *you will* may seem slightly artificial to some, but will not involve the problems of homonymy discussed here.

[21] In the classroom correction test, the same problem arises which affects any test given in the schoolroom: how hard is the subject trying to give the right answer? It is likely that the boy's general orientation toward the schoolroom would tend to reduce the amount of effort they put into this particular test; but we can base our conclusions on the type of grammatical feature which is noticed and corrected, rather than the total number corrected.

[22] Two other types of //-s// can be isolated: the adverbial /s/ of *besides, sometimes,* etc., and the various contracted forms mentioned above: *that's, it's* and *let's.* The first is not frequent enough to provide good data for the small groups discussed here, and the second type shows a loss of the first element of the cluster with no grammatical effect.

# 12

## A Poet's Art of Grammar

PRISCILLA TYLER

"Always the beautiful answer who asks a more beautiful question." So e. e. cummings in his elliptical grammar expressed his faith in the beautiful and ever more beautiful life.[1] One of the poems he wrote as a testament to this faith is "anyone lived in a pretty how town,"[2] to an analysis of which we shall address ourselves here. In this poem, the poet-narrator, poised like an astronaut-aloft, looks down on the cyclic phases of the weather, the seasons, the daily spiritual round of man to discover what happens to those who ask that more beautiful question —and to those who do not. In an exalted mystical frame of reference, the pilgrimages of men interweave, hanging suspended from childhood to death and beyond. Cummings writes of this "pretty how" state in a concentrated shorthand of grammatical intensities. Pronouns, tenses, and syntax patterns move in the language of the poem not as rituals drawn crude and unreflectingly from the bulk of received convention but as sharp and delicate devices honed slightly and sensitively to the poet's own refined uses. The language layout or scheme of the poem is so designed that three series of similar syntax patterns carry the major themes, and the interlocking configurations of these syntax patterns give the poem its artistic shape.

### Vocabulary for Each Series of Syntax Patterns

For each of these three series of similar syntax patterns, cummings chooses a different type of vocabulary. In all but the first series, he tends to choose words more for their relevance to the thematic meaning of the pattern than for their appropriateness to its grammar. The first set of patterns covers the four-phase cycle of the seasons, the weather, and man's daily spiritual life. Its four-measured tread beats like the inevitability of the Pacific surge through the poem. The four seasons introduce this pattern:

      spring      summer      autumn      winter

This version of the pattern is repeated twice again, each time starting with a different season but keeping the chronological order. Cummings also uses this series pattern for the cyclic phases of the weather. For the weather version, he again uses nouns as the items in a series:

> sun    moon    stars    rain

The weather version of the pattern is also repeated twice again, the second time beginning with "stars" and the third time keeping the same order as the first. Cummings uses verbs in his third use of this pattern with the possible fourth verb left to the reader's heightened imagination to propose. This use of the pattern counts out phases in man's daily spiritual life. It occurs only once. It is:

> sleep    wake    hope    and    (then)

The four beats of the seven lines given over to this pattern pulse like the nonreducible rhythm of earthly living. The shifts in the starting-ending phases seem to relate to the major themes. For example, the final line of the poem seems a final comment on the sterile activity of the nonspiritual lives of "women and men." The poem ends with a series of progressive gloom, "sun moon stars rain," as if the universe darkened and finally poured down black tears at the pity of it all.

The three sequences of the series patterns are as follows:

### SEQUENCE I: THE EARTH RHYTHM

Season series
> spring   summer   autumn   winter
> autumn   winter   spring   summer
> summer   autumn   winter   spring

Weather series
> sun moon   stars   rain
> stars   rain   sun   moon
> sun   moon   stars   rain

Round of daily life series
> sleep   wake   hope   and   (then)

### Second Set of Repeated Syntax Patterns

In the second set of repeated syntax patterns, the poet presents one of his two major themes, the faith that there are supreme moments for the spirit to win in a beauty-held, beauty-possessing universe. This second syntax pattern is a noun+verb+noun sequence with the verb the type which takes a cognate, not a direct object (as she sings a *song*, cognate object; she drives a *car*, direct object). Cummings uses this pattern to

describe the beautiful questioners, "anyone and noone," and their opposites, "the someones and everyones." He uses the pattern with its positive lexical fillers for "anyone and noone" and with its negative fillers for the "someones and everyones." As if in a jet stream of joy, "anyone" "sang his didn't" and "danced his did" but "the someones" having less commitment and less vigor merely "did their dance." Then "noone," loving "anyone" "more by more," "laughed his joy" and "cried his grief"; but "the someones" unblissfully married their "everyones," then cruelly "laughed their cryings." Finally "the someones and everyones," their beautiful question silenced, "slept their dream." In contrast, "anyone" and "noone," their dreams of beauty reaching past death into eternity, "more by more dream their sleep," living Now. The special strength of verbs taking cognate objects shows up significantly in these final patterns of this set. The action expressed in the cognate object is simultaneous and coextensive with the verb, whereas the action-result expressed by a direct object does not stay within the overhang of the verb's action but may express a quite different action from the verb's in a chain response to it. By using the verb-cognate object as the prototype pattern in this set, cummings is able to stress that all the difference between the worthy and worthless life lies in whether the "dream" overlays the "sleep" or the "sleep" overlays the "dream."

The syntax pattern of this second sequence tells the stories then of two contrasting types of people through three stages: vocation, marriage, and their confrontation of beauty. The man of no-spirit does minimally with the first, tragically with the second, and fails with the third. The man of spirit finds both joy and love in his earthly life and the fullness of beauty in the ever "more and perfectly more most ethereal" of earth-and-eternal life.

The layout of the sequence below shows how three stages of life for the contrasting types of people are indicated by the same syntax patterns but with a different use of the same vocabularies. The single use of the present in the final pattern is notable as a modest way of expressing the greatest of faith and as the final climactic affirmation of the theme carried by this set of syntax patterns.

### SEQUENCE II: THE SPIRITED, SPIRITUAL LIFE, WORLDLY AND OTHERWORLDLY, AND ITS CONTRAST

| *anyone and noone sequence* | *someones and everyones sequence*<br>(or "women and men") |
|---|---|
| he sang his didn't<br>he danced his did | did their dance |

noone loved him more by more
she laughed his joy
she cried his grief

and more by more
they dream their sleep

someones married their everyones

laughed their cryings

slept their dream

## Use of Grammar Designs

Cummings uses what we shall call grammar designs to begin and end these two contrasting sequences. He begins and ends the "women and men" sequence with the same noun+verb+noun pattern which we have just reviewed as the one he also uses for carrying a major theme. "Reaping-sowing" appear in two combinations in this noun+verb+noun pattern, one at the beginning and one at the end, both versions indicating that the harvest was as worthless as the seed was sterile. ("They sowed their isn't, they reaped their same" and "reaped their sowing.") The cliché "comings and goings" is pressed into an original transform, "went their came." If "women and men" "came" to this earth, then their "coming" might well have been with Wordsworth's "trailing clouds of glory," and cummings' "went" then takes on the pathos of Wordsworth's "prison house." Or perhaps "women and men" just take life so senselessly that it becomes a reversible treadmill or an "up the down staircase" taken on the horizontal.

Cummings also uses as part of this grammar design a "both-and" expression of his own coining which he puts in parentheses. He initially describes "women and men" as "(both little and small)" and terminally as "(both dong and ding)." The first parenthetical remark suggests their minimal spiritual stature; the second recalls the "many bells down" of two earlier lines in the poem where it both times appears in the phrase "with up so floating many bells down" and brings to mind the bell of medieval funeral processions and of Donne's meditations on it. The layout of this grammar design is as follows:

GRAMMAR DESIGN I: FOR "WOMEN AND MEN"
(THE WORTHLESSNESS POTENTIAL OF HUMAN LIFE)

Beginning of the sequence
Women and men (both little and small)
They sowed their isn't they reaped their same

End of the sequence
Women and men (both dong and ding)
reaped their sowing and went their came

The words chosen to fill the two uses of the syntax pattern just

described are words which fall into contrasting combinations. Cummings seems to imply that life is as sheer as his style, because life is a simple matter of significantly arranging and rearranging a limited set of obvious dichotomies. The seven dichotomies in this poem like the grasshopper in another of his poems become rearrangingly (that is, "rea(be)rran-(com)gi(e)ngly") verb and cognate object expressions repeated twice in different orders, with the meaning turned first one way, then the opposite.

#### VOCABULARY ENCLOSING SEMANTIC SPACE BY CONTRASTING WORD COUPLETS

| Dichotomies | Verb and cognate object expressions |
|---|---|
| laugh—cry | she laughed his joy she cried his grief |
| joy—grief | laughed their cryings |
| sleep—dream | they slept their dream |
| | dream their sleep |
| sow—reap | they sowed their isn't they reaped their same |
| | reaped their sowing |
| song and dance | he sang his didn't he danced his did |
| do's and dont's | |
| comings and goings | went their came |

Out of the common stuff of such everyday bread-and-butter words, with a vocabulary spare of sophisticated reference, he creates a statement on man and his universe.

The grammar design by which he begins and ends the syntax sequence telling of "anyone's and noone's" life is more fully developed and presents the second major theme, that gradualities of a growing love and a growing spirit are much the same. For the syntax pattern of this design, he chooses a medial prepositional phrase which signifies gradualities in time (hour by hour), space (mile by mile), and degree (little by little); and also spatial dimensions (nine by ten) and directional points (north by northwest)—all abstractions. For vocabulary to fill this syntax pattern, cummings chooses words for the coming on of spring as: *snow   earth april   bird   tree   leaf*, and for an awakening readiness and responsiveness in man and the cosmic as: *still   stir   wish   spirit   when   if   yes now*. He slips this range of vocabulary into the two slots of the medial prepositional phrase pattern. The abstractness of the original phrase still echoes in the coinings to enhance their spirit quality. The reader expects the phrase to be a semantic carrier for abstractions like time, distance, compass points, but which of the repertoire of uses for this

phrase is the prototype of any particular cummings coining he has difficulty in deciding. In reading "tree by leaf," for example, the reader can take as his prototype model "year by year" or "north by northwest." He is also free to assume that cummings' phrase blends all the prototypes. We can, therefore, interpret "noone's" love for "anyone" as having grown by compass points and/or gradualities of beauty, "tree by leaf," "bird by snow," "stir by still," until finally "noone" stood in the superlative state of love and commitment to love where she found "anyone's any was all to her."

### Nature of Grammar Design II

Similarly, their spirit-life moves by compass points and/or gradualities of beauty to a final point of certainty and commitment: "earth by april" "wish by spirit" "if by yes." The healthy positiveness of such dimensions is set off by the earth-anchored analogy of the physical-minded "busy-folk." "Having buried the two lovers," the "busy-folk," in their squatted minds, thought of them as pathetically lying together "side by side" and by reference to "side by side" rather than to more abstract uses of the phrase, conceive of this last physical contiguity of the lovers in its forlorn aspects of "little by little" "was by was" "all by all" "deep by deep." The layout of this second grammar design is divided by the phrase "more by more," a medial prepositional phrase transform of the conventional "more and more." The transform enhances the meaning of the phrase and strengthens the design of this final part of the structural scheme of the poem.

GRAMMAR DESIGN II: FOR "ANYONE AND NOONE"
(GROWING LOVE, EARTHLY, WITH GROWING SPIRIT,
OTHERWORLDLY, CONTRASTING PHYSICALNESS OF THE "BUSY")

Beginning of the sequence

noone loved him more by more
            when by now
            tree  by leaf
            bird by snow
            stir by still

End of the sequence

busy folk buried them side by side
            little by little
            was by was
            all by all
            deep by deep

and more by more they dream their sleep
        earth by april
        wish by spirit
        if by yes

Though the poem focuses in particular on the love- and spirit-life of
"anyone and noone" and gives their venture together into beauty added
definition by contrast to the nonessential activities of "women and men,"
the human condition in the large is part of the poem's concerns. The
chance we take in living is symbolized by the chance we take in reading
the first line of the poem. We may read "pretty how town" with a major
stress on pretty so that it means a town with a prétty howdy-dee-do state
of affairs or with a stress on "how" so that it means a town in which
things move along in a beautiful manner, that is, with a "pretty hów."
Whichever way we read the town's name, we'll feel its other meaning as
a choral resonance. The debatable choice of one stress pattern rather
than another and the tentative grasp with which we justify our choice
are just part of living in an environment where "up" is "so floating." The
upness is so mercurial and mystical that the more beautiful question
slips easily from tangibility and "pretty hów town" turns downside up
into "prétty how town." Children have intimations of upness but their
tendrils of aspiration die out; "only the snow," the poet says, "can begin
to explain how."

The poet breaks in here and there in the poem to comment, as here, on
the tentativeness of our reach for beauty or sometimes to inject his own
tangy note of irony. He, for example, ironically commends "noone's"
minimal emphasis on materialism in her love for "anyone" with an idiom
pattern usually indicating a gross materialistic motive. "His bank
account was all to her" is a traditional use of the "all-to" pattern;
"anyone's any was all to her" is cummings' ironic coining. The irony
of "the someone's and everyone's" performing a ritual without realizing
that its meaning is dead is implied in "They said their nevers," "nevers"
here being a slot-slip for "prayers" in "they said their prayers" or for
"vows" in "they said their vows." Finally the uncapitalized Christian
and surnames become paradoxical, once they are abstracted from their
parochial meanings in the poem. The poet says anyone is perfectible yet
noone is perfectible and everyone is imperfectible.

The ironic thread glints also in "i guess" in "anyone died i guess." The
irony of "i guess" is directed to the meaning and perhaps the grammar
of "died." "anyone and noone" did not die in the sense that their life
together ended. It is ironic to have to use the term *death* to indicate

their entry into a heightened, otherworldly life. "anyone and noone" "dream their sleep" after their earth-death, getting an "if by yes" response in the Ever Now. All they had is faith to believe in the eternality of the spirit-life. This heightened life is a refutation of "died" in its traditional sense. Perhaps with his use of "i guess" cummings was also putting in here his personal comment on the grammar of "anyone died." "Anyone" is not the subject of "died" in the sense that Mary is in "Mary makes a cake." The instrumentality for "anyone's" dying comes from beyond the powers of "anyone." Because cummings is dreaming of a responsive universe beyond the individual and wording his dream by a delicate and sensitive weaving together of grammatical meanings, he could have been well aware of the inconsistency which a traditional theory of the subject as agent of the action of the verb would introduce into his use of "died." He is using "died" here as what an eighteenth century grammarian would call a neuter verb, that is, a verb in which the source of the action lives outside the declared subject. "The car drives well," "the perfume bottle travels well" are neuter uses of the verbs "drive" and "travel." It is within the range of probability, then, that cummings' "i guess" suggests that the acceptance of ourselves at our most instrumental in death is part of the cummings picture of the faithful pilgrim.

## Poet's Use of Present Tense

Cummings implies the mystical extensiveness of his pilgrim-haunted universe by his sparing and special use of the present tense. The unfailing certainty of each man's opportunity for a spirit-life he suggests by his pronouncement on the Wordsworth-flawed children, who "guess" but "are apt to forget to remember." The unfailing futility of the nonspiritual, nonspirited life he suggests by the use of the present "isn't" for both the seed and the harvest of "women and men." The use of the present tense of "isn't" as object is made more significant by the use of the past tense of "did," "didn't," and "came" as objects. These past tense objects put the main story in a doubled past and bring out the significance of the present in "isn't" as the symbol of utter worthlessness and particularly in its opposite, "dream," as the symbol of utmost worth. The present tense of greatest moment in the poem is the present in which "anyone and noone" now "dream their sleep" in an ever Today, keeping the continuity of their spiritual life unbroken by death. Together in measured and measureless time the lives of these children of "upness-so-floating" move in constantly renewing love on earth and spirituality on non-earth; "tree by leaf," "if by yes." For indeed it is "more by more"

that they "dream their sleep." Cummings thus dares not just an eternal present but a progressive eternal present, and the grammar of our language responds and gives him who has dared to ask this more beautiful question the beautiful answer.

As the bell Donne refers to in his meditation tolls for death, the bell cummings refers to may toll for a life which subsumes death and earth-life. Cummings suggests that no man is an island but in a different sense from Donne's when "anyone" (in contrast to "any man" in Donne) goes to death, he breaks off a piece of our continent only apparently; rather he extends the continent of mankind into the spirit universe. The sense of identification of each one of us with any man in the totality of mankind is to be gained from reading cummings as it is to be gained from reading Donne. As mentioned earlier, overlaying their parochial meanings in cummings' poem are the conventional meanings of the four pronouns: *anyone, everyone, someone, no one*. The meanings that these four pronouns conventionally have are part, then, of their total chordal resonance for the reader. The paradoxes of a life of renewing spirit for anyone and noone in their conventional meanings and of a wasting of spirit for some, even everyone, put us firmly back in place as members of the totality of mankind. Reading these pronouns for their conventional meanings makes us face that the dichotomies of spirit are not allocated to this individual or that group in the otherness of society but lie in each of us—in our individual holdings of our many selves. We are ourselves anyone, noone, someone, everyone, "and therefore" we can say Donne's words both in the Donne and the cummings sense—"never send to know for Whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."

## Use of Grammar Principles to Make a Special Language

In this poem, one enters the temple of e. e. cummings' art and vision in large measure by taking particular thought about grammatical meanings, because it is by his use of grammar principles that he makes the special language of the poem. In interpreting this poem, we read its words on several levels. One of the most significant of these levels is that of cummings' linguistic theory. Understanding the theories by which he chooses and orders his words, coins his language, is important to understanding the meaning of the poem. He has, for example, demonstrated in this poem several linguistic theories—that a word can have two meanings at once; that syntax is a window frame structure into which nontraditional vocabulary can be slipped like new windows for old; and that grammatical features like tense and pronouns can be honed to new

meanings in the sensitively established communication system of a poem.

The theory of structural linguistics (or tagmemics) is that the grammar of language is a cosmic lattice work and that the vocabulary of the language fills the slots of the lattice work in systematic ways—some vocabulary ritualistically fitting here, other vocabulary fitting there. This is language observed in its layout aspect as a still life or schema. Language observed in its dynamic production aspect appears as a linear-shaped melody in which the writer or speaker dances out his rhythms according to prototype rituals. The language can be both clear and dense, producing variously its art by a one-noted melody or a chordal harmony.

In this poem cummings arranges a vocabulary of semantic contrasts like pieces of stained glass in linear patterns. These linear patterns he measures out in an interlocking balance of designs and floats them adrift in space, like a Calder mobile or a poem-blend of Mozart precision and Debussy mysticism. The image effect of this poem seems to me not unlike the image effect of modern linguistic theory. Knowing the way a poet understands and uses language may help in appreciating the way a linguist understands and analyzes language. And the reverse may be true. Reading a poem as we have done in this paper, then, suggests that the language theories of artist and linguist have something in common and that grammar can be made not only science but, at its most elevated, art.

## Notes

[1] E. E. Cummings, "Introduction" to "New Poems (1938)" in *Poems 1923–1954* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1954), pp. 331–332.

[2] Copyright, 1940, by E. E. Cummings. Reprinted from his volume POEMS 1923–1954 by permission of Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., and Faber and Faber Ltd., Publishers.

# The Study of Composition

# The Study of Composition

$\mathcal{T}$he teaching of writing as writing—or, as some prefer, teaching the process of composing—has gained renewed interest among designers of the new English curriculum. They ask, "To what extent can and should we show pupils how to write?"

No one contends that the elementary language arts program of the past has neglected the importance of writing. In fact, most school beginners have been given composition experience before they could themselves write, with teachers serving as scribes for individually dictated or group-composed stories. In part, the intent has been to relate writing to written language and to reading. But the intent has also included the provision of insight into the need for selection and sequence in thinking through and putting down what the writer wished to communicate.

Self-expression through writing has long been accepted as an essential in the language arts program. During the past decade, with the stress on the need to stimulate and support creativity, teachers have become even more sensitive to the role played by original writing.

Providing a variety of occasions for writing purposefully has been a daily concern of most teachers, soon after the first few months or the first year of school. Pupils learn to write sentence answers to questions and, as they progress, to take notes from their reading, make outlines, and prepare simple reports. The amount and variety of writing done by children in a well-developed language arts program is remarkable. Thus, proposals that more may need to be done may cause initial surprise.

However, the advocates of new approaches to the teaching of writing generally do not question that children are writing a good deal. What they hope to demonstrate is that children can be taught to write better by attending to some aspects of composition that we have so far neglected in working with younger writers.

One major area in which we could and should do much more is relating writing to the study of language. Making sentences that are tighter or more succinct, it is thought, may be encouraged as children study the nature of sentence combining. Variety in sentence structure can be practised as well as studied; richness of detail can be achieved by learning how to add to or embed in first-draft sentences new and relevant structural elements. In short, without necessarily dealing in terminology, children can be helped to become better writers by learning more about

how words are put together, as Professors Hunt and Strickland in the preceding section and Professor Evertts in this suggest.

Relationships between the study of literature and writing are also being sought. A literature program that provides children with many opportunities to build an awareness of structure and form invites opportunities to reinforce in one's own writing what is being learned about form. Repetitive elements are noted in the analysis of what is being read, and the use of these elements begins to be reflected in what is written. When the fable is being studied, some children may be encouraged to try their hand at writing a fable. Mrs. Evertts reports at length on this particular approach.

Still another approach for composition lessons comes from the revival of interest in rhetoric. The writer chooses a topic and develops it in the form of some particular kind of composition, finding and selecting details, choosing a point of view, and deciding upon an audience. "The experience of working with and within the frame set by the variables of the writing process," as Professor Douglas identifies it in his first paper, deserves more time. Preparation to write, or drafting, is as worthy of attention as the actual writing itself.

Relating writing to the study of both language and literature, then planning and preparing to write—these are some of the new sources on which the study of composition with children seems to be drawing. The three papers here presented deal with these sources as already indicated. In addition, Professor Douglas's second paper presents a scholarly, critical account of classical rhetoric that serves to prepare us for a better understanding of the base for and redirection of the new rhetoric.

We have a broad base of concern for writing in the elementary school. The challenge, then, is to consider whether we can build on this base a curriculum that will enable children to improve their present performance. Such a program will instill a growing consciousness of how to use language, and it will produce young writers possessing the power of effective communication.

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## On Teaching the Process of Writing

### Wallace W. Douglas

$\mathcal{B}$y now nearly everyone is aware of the intellectual bankruptcy and practical ineffectiveness of the oddly assorted collection of activities that go under the name of "composition teaching." There are plenty of studies to tell us that it makes no great matter whether we assign many or few papers, whether we "correct" papers in detail or concentrate on a few major errors, whether we evaluate papers for what is called "content" or for form. Nor is there any effect from working out various combinations of these and other variables. On the whole, there is no improvement (or so little as to make no difference) in either the students' use of language or in their ability to construct written pieces of some length and complexity. It is a remarkable tribute to the glamour of grammarye that the bill for this system (if what now goes on can be called a system[1]) has continued to be met for the eighty-odd years of its existence.

Until quite lately the full significance of such studies was hardly perceived, and it was pretty generally felt that our remedy lay in new machines (programed instruction, lay readers, transparencies), new subject matter for papers (literary analyses), or revivification of old techniques ("every teacher a teacher of English"). Within the last five years, however, more and more people have begun to see the necessity of a reexamination not merely of our teaching tools and techniques but also of the theory that they more or less represent. Thus in this paper I shall be presenting what seems to me to be the product of our reexamination—that is, some general ideas about *the nature of composition* which seem to be developing in these days. If these ideas come to maturity, if they are allowed to, then I think the framework or theoretical basis of composition teaching will be markedly changed. How much better, if at all, things will be for the change I would not want to predict. It does seem to me, though, that the general effect will be a liberating one, such that you may find yourselves able to do purposefully and with good conscience

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some of the things you now do a little uncertainly and often, I suspect, with some anxiety.

The ideas I refer to are stated here as propositions:

1. Composition is a process, and what is to be taught in a composition class is the operations, in their order, that make up the process of composing in words.

2. Ancient or classical rhetoric, taking it as a system for teaching composition, may offer modern composition teachers some useful suggestions both as to theory and practice.

3. Some of the techniques and findings of modern linguistic analysis may be usefully adapted to the teaching of sentence development.

4. But otherwise the teaching of grammar and the establishment of norms of usage are not, however worthy in themselves, occupations that have any connection with the teaching of composition.

In this paper I shall be dealing with the composing process; in my second paper I shall take up what I think rhetoric has to offer us. I shall not be able to discuss the third and fourth propositions directly; I thought it useful to mention them, however, because "grammar" has always played so important a part in our thinking about composition. I shall touch lightly on that point in this paper.

## History of Modern Composition Teaching

Before discussing these propositions, I would like to give you a very brief analysis of the principles that now control our teaching of composition. And with them I will include some reference to the circumstances in which the modern form of composition teaching was developed.

For most people the teaching of composition is justified, and its practice defined, by describing it as a means of improving either a child's use of English or his power of effective expression or communication. The first of these two justifications is the earlier, the originating one. Composition teaching in its modern form is in the school curriculum because President Eliot of Harvard believed (probably taking the idea from John Locke) that study of what was known as the "mother tongue" was at once a worthy study in itself and at the same time a useful preparation for learning foreign languages. It may be that Eliot's interest in the "mother tongue" was not unrelated to the politics of his attitudes towards the professors of the classical languages.

Certain other conditions at Harvard during Eliot's early years seemed to call for study of the "mother tongue" for practical as well as theoretical

reasons. The introduction of written entrance examinations (as a means of upgrading the schools!) revealed that the young gentlemen seeking matriculation at Harvard were unable to put passages from the classics into idiomatic English. Nor was the situation much improved when it became possible to make up the examinations with questions about English classics rather than with translations from Greek or Latin. "Bad English" replaced "translation English" as the object of attack. The evidence of the entrance examinations must have been confirmed by the students' performance on the written exercises which rising enrollments had forced upon the faculty. Hitherto ranking at Harvard had been managed by daily recitation and oral examinations. It seems likely that the faculty must also have *heard* strange or surprising usages as Harvard became less a finishing school for Boston and Cambridge, with their Unitarian proclivities, and more a regional, eventually a national, college.

At any rate, in the middle seventies Eliot called his classmate Adams Sherman Hill to Harvard and charged him to set up a course which would have as its purpose not simply the study of the "mother tongue" but even the improvement of its use by Harvard students. At the time the only model for such a course was that of the teaching of the classical and the modern foreign languages. In the old way of learning foreign languages, one began by studying the grammar, which meant memorizing conjugations and declensions and rules for the uses of various tenses, moods, and cases. The usage of the language was learned by translation exercises. In early stages of study, sentences from the foreign language would be put into English or English sentences would be put into the foreign language. Later there would be "composition," that is, the writing of extended pieces in the foreign language. These were, of course, checked for the students' knowledge of the paradigms and the rules of syntax. The parallel with our techniques in the composition class is exact.

The consequences for the teaching of English composition may be seen in the following description of English A (freshman composition) at Harvard, from the report to the Board of Overseers by its Visiting Committee on English composition in 1897:

> . . . the work is not inspiring; —no more ambitious and no more inspiring than the similar elementary drill in the musical scales, or the mixing of colors and drawing of straight lines. Its end is so to train the child, muscularly and mentally, from its earliest years, that when it completes its school education he or she[2] might be able on occasion to talk with the pen as well as with the tongue, —in other words to make a plain, clear, simple statement of any matter under consideration, neatly written, correctly spelled, grammatically expressed: —And this is English A.

According to that, composition is about equivalent to penmanship or even drawing. And indeed an earlier Visiting Committee, that of 1895 (but having the same members), had defined writing as "the habit of talking with the pen instead of the tongue." The result of this definition is an enforcement or support of the techniques borrowed from the teachers of foreign languages. For if writing is no more than a transcription of the line of speech, then it is easy to analogize learning to write and learning to speak. Then it follows that if a child learns the forms of the spoken language by constant, incessant practice, it must be that he will learn the forms of the written language in the same way. Or rather (to be completely accurate), since learning to write is merely an extension of learning to speak, the same habit-forming techniques will serve for both. This theory gives us our justification for weekly and even daily papers: "one learns to write by writing." It also justifies our red-pencilling of papers; does not a child learn to speak by imitation and correction? The theory of the Visiting Committee very easily became a rationalization for the English teacher's wholesale borrowing of the techniques of the foreign language teachers. Indeed it appears that the borrowing has been all but forgotten; it is believed that our techniques have come to us by special creation or, at least, our own discovery.

These new ideas about composition were carried out into the world by what the Visiting Committee of 1897 called "a race of young instructors." Their influence on the teaching—or nonteaching—of composition, which was indeed to be revolutionary, has persisted to the present, impervious alike to shifts of doctrine and results of research. One potentially significant change did occur around the thirties, when, it seems, some people became convinced of the futility of the kind of composition work I have just described, to say nothing of the absurdity of the grammar and usage that the textbooks were giving them to teach. As a way out, they invented the concept of language growth. This principle assumes that the ideas or experiences a child wants to communicate will determine his use of the "elements of composition"—whatever those may be. As a natural consequence of growth, a child will expand the number and complexity of his ideas, add to his word-stock, and increase his stock of usable material. Presumably as a function of socialization, he will learn to want to communicate. According to this principle, teachers do not so much teach as guide the child's growth in what is known as "language power" or "effective expression." The guidance consists in constructing the child's environment so that his experience (but not necessarily his linguistic experience) will be enriched. The teacher's only direct intervention

comes in the form of providing the class the occasion and motivation for writing; it is assumed that if a child wants to write, he will, on the average, write well.

A classic statement of the position appeared in the late Porter G. Perrin's presidential address to the NCTE in 1949:

> No matter in what dialect it is stated or under how many subheads it is divided, the basic aim of work in composition is simple: to help young people communicate their information and ideas, their imagined conceptions, and their desires and feelings appropriately in situations they meet or may meet—to speak and write to people.

On the whole, though, the consequences of this change in "philosophy" were not given much attention. "Language power" and "effective expression" were both defined as or denoted by a command over certain of the items in grammar and usage where there is a possibility of choice among competing forms. Teachers kept on with their composition work in the usual way: a review of grammar accompanied or followed by many themes, in which writing students made errors necessitating further teaching. Whatever it may have been in its beginning, in its development, the new philosophy became little more than a euphemism.

### Fundamental: Skill of Seeing in Detail

After this necessary if lengthy preamble, I now wish to consider first of all one of the fundamentals of writing skill. Probably the basis of all writing is accurate and detailed looking, observation of the world of fact and idea. As Erich Fromm says, "The act of seeing is about the most important act one can perform in one's life." It seems to be the case, however, that human beings do not naturally see or think in detail, except in areas where they have great interest or concern, and even then not always.

You can know that two objects are locomotives—and for most purposes talk about them quite comfortably, too—without seeing much of their actual structure. If you are observant, you may, let us say, notice that some of the wheels are larger than others and that the large ones are connected by a long sort of pole or flat bar. If you are very observant, you might even notice that the wheels are differently distributed: on one engine there are, in order, two sets of free wheels, four sets on the shafts, and another set of free wheels; on the other engine there are one set of free wheels, two groups of three sets of wheels on shafts, and another set of free wheels.

Of course, it would be a lot easier simply to name the locomotives.

I could say that the first was called a Mountain type or (on the New York Central, which doesn't run through mountains) a Mohawk. The second was called a Mallet type, though it would be more accurate to say that it was an American variation of the original French form. Perhaps some of you would know that I was referring to, in the first case, a locomotive with two pilot-truck axles (four wheels), four driving axles (eight wheels), and one training axle (two wheels). In the second case, the locomotive has one leading axle (two wheels), two groups of three driving axles (six wheels each), and one trailing axle (two wheels). But only a specialist would be able to translate the names into the specific details.

We need to remember that by fifth or sixth grade many children are already specialists. They know about stamps or boats or military weapons; even today you may find one or two, every couple of years or so, who will be up on locomotives. We are agreed that we should always try to discover these specialties of the children in our classes, and as much as possible use them as sources for their writings.

But we cannot rest content with Cato's old prescription: keep to the matter or the facts, the words will follow. In the first place, as I just indicated, it is the habit of specialists to operate as if the intensions of terms were immediately apparent to all.[3] This is not so, even when the talk or writing is between specialists, and less so if a general audience is involved. In the second place, not all our students have specialties. Some of them are probably too young; others may not have had the necessary opportunity. (But we have to look, all the same, and expect to be surprised.) In the third place, even children who do have specialties do not always make the connection between the capacities that come with information and the incapacities, as it were, that go along with its absence. They do not easily see why they get a good mark for a paper on their stamp collection and a bad mark for a paper on, say, school spirit.[4]

And so I would say that the skill of seeing in detail is the first thing that children must be taught, as a ground and preparation for all their later experiences in writing.

Further, children must be taught both the need and the way to translate their general or special knowledge into terms that will be generally comprehensible. They need to be taught to write, as well as to see, in detail.

### Creation of a Paper as Focus

I am now going to talk about my first proposition, that composition is a process that has as its result the creation of a paper of some sort.[5]

I would like to begin this topic by suggesting some differences between *communication* and *composition*. What I want to say might be put like this: though all compositions are, in one way or another, communications, not all communications need be compositions. You may :ote, in passing but for future reference, my use of the words "compositions" and "communications." I used them to suggest my interest in the products of the composing process, for I think we get along much better when we remember that our students are composing fairly concrete things—compositions.

Suppose now that we think for the moment of a simple communication situation, something like ordering breakfast. If you are at home you can probably get breakfast simply by saying something like "Is breakfast ready?" or "Good morning, what's for breakfast?" Or perhaps you only need to appear, looking expectant. As a matter of fact when you are at home you really, for obvious reasons, don't have to communicate much of anything; unless yours is a household with help, the content of the breakfast is probably determined by habit or many prior decisions.

But suppose you are ordering breakfast in a restaurant. Now, because you have to choose among a number of possibilities, you must be more or less specific about your wants. You may manage with "Breakfast #1" or "I'll have the Early Bird Weight Watcher's Special." But the chances are fairly good that you will want to tell the waiter "whole wheat toast" or (if you happen to be in Boston) "coffee, cream on the side." Simple observation or trial and error learning will tell you how specific you must be. On the whole, you will probably not be much bothered by questions of form, though you may wonder about the formalities of address.

Suppose now we think of putting something about breakfast into a "paper." "Something about breakfast in a 'paper'." Now we are talking about an assignment, or what Henry James called a "germ"; that is, we are talking about the beginning of something. But let us be specific. Let us think about a child who is at the beginning of something, an assignment to write a paper on breakfast. Not to order breakfast. Not to tell someone what he wants for breakfast. But to write a paper about breakfast. What kind of situation is he in?

In the first place, he is in the situation of having to write a paper. Of course, he is communicating; at least he is insofar as he can really feel that he has a receiver for his message. But a more important fact about his situation is that his message is a paper of some sort; that is, it is an extended unit of discourse whose limits are determined not by utilitarian ("How much do I need to say to be clear?") but by formal consideration.

A student writing a paper asks—or ought to ask, if he has been properly taught—questions about how much and what he ought to say if he is to make a satisfactory example of whatever kind of paper he has chosen, or has been told, to write.[6]

To put it another way, the student is in a pretty artificial situation. Unless he is writing a letter, no normal person is likely to want to write on breakfast, either breakfast in general or his own most recent breakfast.[7] Conceivably a poet—a rather modern one, no doubt—might write a sonnet to orange juice, toast, and coffee; an essayist might do a "short piece," as Thurber called it, on the frustrations in getting a properly done egg; a novelist or playwright might use *his* breakfast to start or swell a scene he happened to be ready to go at after eating. But most people, particularly young people in school, are not likely to be much interested in writing anything on breakfast, let alone a paper. And so when we ask a child to write, I think we should above all remember that we are asking him to do something that is, on the whole, rather unnatural. Neither instinct, nor intuition, nor experience will tell him what to do, how to proceed.

### Acts Involved in Writing and Their Order

Hence—and this is a second obvious fact about the situation of a child who is asked to write a paper—he needs someone who can give him the proper directions. As Edward Gordon, of Yale, has reminded us, "the student who is *made* to write is seldom *taught how* to write." We ought, he says, to put the acts involved in writing into operational terms and into some sort of logical order.[8] I would prefer to talk about the acts involved in the process of composition, but that is only a stylistic refinement to strengthen the feeling that "writing" is an activity in which some sort of material is composed into some sort of form. And certainly Professor Gordon's remarks point us teachers toward the questions we should ask: what are the acts involved in writing, and how may they be given order?

First of all, I think a child needs considerable practice in taking what I have called, following Henry James, the germ of a paper and making it into an actual "paper idea." Here I think he must have the experience of working with and within the frame set by the variables of the writing process. The first of these variables is the student's stock of material. The second is his control of various accepted forms of writing. This variable is especially important for beginning students of writing or for students who are beginning to learn about writing. The third variable

is the student's awareness of the expectations of his teacher and (if he is fortunate) of various editors with whom his teacher has made him acquainted.[9]

Perhaps I can make these points clearer if I return to that paper about breakfast. I shall try to describe the stages that a student writing such a paper might be expected to go through, might be expected to want to have called to his attention. For the moment at least, let us not worry about why a child is writing on breakfasts instead of, say, the mythical meaning of Peter Rabbit. Let us just take the problem as a kind of dramatic given, one perhaps little less improbable than that which starts the mighty plot of *Lear*.

Let us suppose, then, that we have a student who, for some reason, has chosen "breakfast" or "breakfasts" as a subject to write about. He isn't very sure what he can say about the subject. True, he knows what he knows, which is a good deal about breakfast habits in England, France, and Germany. But he doesn't know how to make anything of what he knows. He is a well-trained student, though, and so he has learned that material must be adjusted to audience, or that you can find a form only when you have a place of publication and know what forms it uses.[10] He has already, you see, got beyond writing for his teacher who has, indeed, pretty much written himself out of the script. So for his first job, then, he sets about trying to decide on a publication that might take a piece based on his information. Since he is a good student, on whom instruction has taken, he doesn't take long to decide that no real publication is likely to take his kind of information in any form. It would be too commonplace for a women's or general home magazine, he suspects. He speculates a moment about trying to work out a parallel between breakfast habits and politics, which might give him a letter to the editor. De Gaulle, croissants, and NATO; Britain, the Common Market and kippered herring. . . . But the idea soon loses its promise, and so he decides he had better try for some kind of student publication.

Now let us think for a moment about another student. This one has been told to write a paper on breakfasts. Unfortunately his only information is about his own breakfasts. But again he is, fortunately, a well-trained child. And so he begins by making some notes about his last few breakfasts: what he ate, how it felt and tasted, how he looked, who was at the table, and so forth. Then, in order to go beyond his own information, he talks to his classmates, to his mother, to the school dietitian, to a restaurant keeper that he knows. He looks the word up in a large dictionary. And on the advice of his teacher he takes a glance at a Words-

worth concordance that the school happens to have. Again following the advice of his teacher, he riffles through back issues of some of the women's magazines to see what they have to offer. By himself now, he decides that something might be done by comparing magazines like *Vogue* and others like *Ladies Home Journal.* He doesn't have much notion of what he will find, or what he can do with what he does find. But he knows that his first need is material: facts, notions, ideas—the stuff that papers are built from.

### Nature of the Generating Process

You will notice, I hope, that neither of these students begins by trying to develop a thesis sentence: "The breakfast habits of British, French, and German people are very different," for instance. Nor do they proceed by the process known in the books as narrowing a subject: from "breakfasts" to "foreign breakfasts" to "British, French, and German breakfasts" to "differences among British, French, and German breakfasts."

Instead they begin with material, or in the search for it. And they know enough to allow time for their material to generate its ideas. Obviously their teacher plans so that each will have the time he needs; probably the second student, the one starting from scratch, will need more than the first boy.

The ideas developed in this generating process will be of two kinds. One kind will be ideas for papers, those connected with the tactics of writing. I mean ideas about form: how to begin and end, whether to be personal or general, whether to use many or few details, whether to be formal, informal, or neutral in style, and so on. These are the simple, practical questions that all writers ask as they plan how to reach their audience.

Another kind of idea will be those that touch the meaning or significance of the material. In the old rhetorical scheme of things, such questions went under the headings of the "topics" and of "determining the nature of the case." In this case, there would no doubt be questions of treatment. Should the paper be written seriously or lightly? Should it rest on some sort of sociological analysis, or should its ground be merely common sense, reportorial observation? Is there a historical point to be looked for? Should the treatment be comparative, making statements about worth, or size, or use? These are all questions about what can be seen in the subject of the paper.

You will notice that I have nowhere said anything very much about

the actual writing of a paper. Since I have mentioned publication, you must realize that I have the writing of papers in mind, however dimly. But I have wanted to postpone talking about it as long as possible, simply to emphasize my conviction that we spend too much time on papers, both in our teaching and in our discussing of composition. It is the development and growth of papers that we must look to, not the preparation of clean copy.

And so even now, when it looks as if I must finally say something about papers, I am not going to. I am going to talk instead about drafting. This is surely one of the most neglected of all the relevant topics in composition. Oh, of course we urge children to make drafts of their papers. As a matter of fact, we probably begin doing so far too early in their schooling. And what we are talking about is hardly a draft, in any functional sense of the word. When we use the word *draft*, we generally mean "a rough copy that can be corrected," and we have in mind that the draft version is pretty much the whole paper, ready to be turned in as soon as it has been surveyed for errors. Thus we turn writing into copyreading, no doubt to the detriment of both.

But there is another factor in this approach which is perhaps even more injurious to a student's having a successful learning experience in composition. It seems to me that the word *drafting*, which I used a moment ago, points to a very important part of the writing process. That is, the changes in both conception and execution that generally take place as a writer carries on his job. What happens is that fact builds on fact, detail on detail, idea on idea; and a completed paper is the outcome of this complex of interactions. In the end, a writer's view of his subject and his notions of how he wants to write it up are likely to be fuller and more complicated than the ones he started with. And students above all need to be given an opportunity to have this change occur. But by our insistence on using the word *draft*, with all its connotations of completeness (at least in our usage), we tend to keep students from developing a sense of papers as the product of more or less organic growth, and of course we also keep them from experiencing such growth.

It seems to me that we might well spend a little of our curriculum planning on devising ways to provide our students with this experience. Really, I suppose, we only need to plan our teaching so as to give them the time for it to happen. We might begin by asking why learners and amateurs should be expected to do a job as quickly—oh, more quickly— than professionals. Once we see that question, we will very likely take a different approach to our teaching. We will give up treating the com-

position class as a place to make assignments, receive papers, and discuss their errors and weaknesses. Rather we will try to organize it as a place where writing can go on—sometimes, no doubt, for rather extended periods. As a necessary concomitant, we would also, I suspect, give up thinking of ourselves as playing the relatively passive role of "readers." Instead we would, I suppose, think of ourselves as "directors of learning," if I may borrow one of the cant phrases of the moment. Or maybe we could simply see ourselves as people who are rather closely engaged in helping students develop various kinds of papers.

### A Kind of Coda

May I close this paper with a kind of coda? The theme is the writer's need for time.

Due to some peculiar circumstances, I did not have a manuscript ready for presentation in Baltimore on the 25th of April. I talked from a partial draft, from some hasty notes, and from my accumulated stock of ideas about composition. At the end of the meeting, I told Professor Frazier that I would have a manuscript ready for him by May 15. Later I heard from Mrs. Evertts that I could have until the 20th. I am writing these words on the 14th.

Now as I come to the end of this assignment, I am aware that my section on drafting is rather sketchy and not very precise. I comfort myself with the belief that it is suggestive, as the saying goes; but I know that it does not have the kind of practical detail that those who want to change teaching practices must present. The fact of the matter is that, though I have felt the importance of drafting for a long time, I haven't really given it much thought of any kind, let alone the kind of thought that must go into making a paper about a subject.

I could conceal the situation by reordering the paper, putting the material on drafting in a less emphatic position than the conclusion. Better yet, of course, I could sit myself down and think about drafting in terms of this paper, taking advantage of the extended deadline to do so. But somehow or other I cannot get started on either course. I seem to have conditioned myself to the deadline of the 15th. And so, though I *know* that I could do more with this paper, I *feel* that I have done all that I can now. Exploration of drafting is work for another day.

Might there not be a profit to everyone engaged in a composition class if the class were set up to allow students such time as I suggest I need here? Notice this is not merely time to think about drafting; it is also time to feel enough dissatisfaction with a current situation so that there

is a real need to start moving toward a new state of balance. After all, we are always telling students to let their papers "cool off" before going over them or readying them for submission. But has anyone ever done any research on the minimum and optimum lengths of "cooling off," due allowance being made for individual differences?

## Notes

[1] For a fair and accurate description of one section of this system, the college freshman composition course, see Albert R. Kitzhaber, *Themes, Theories, and Therapy* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1963), especially pages 8–26.

[2] Evidently the Committee found the idiom of the "mother tongue" too much for even its skills. Note its attempt to find its way around the lack of a personal pronoun of common gender in Present English.

[3] "Intension": all the properties and qualities (the attributes) contained in a concept or signified by a term.

[4] Nor, unfortunately, do their teachers.

[5] One has to say "of some sort" because there is really no very firm or useful terminology for the "kinds" of nonfiction prose and, hence, no knowledge of what writings ought to be expected at various ages.

[6] Really there ought to be no objection to giving students pretty definite instructions about what length a paper should be, what kind of material it should have, how it should be planned, and whatever other requirements may occur. Writers always work under directions that are almost, if not quite, as constraining; why shouldn't children who are writing? After all, they will deduce the teacher's requirements, wishes, preferences, even though she may not state them.

[7] Has it yet been noticed how many themes are simply letters—in the sense, that is, that they embody no public form?

[8] Edward J. Gordon, "Teaching the Structure of Writing," *Baltimore Journal of Education*, 42 (1965–66), 28–35, at p. 29.

[9] Developing a sense of editorial requirements in students is perhaps the most important of the composition teacher's jobs.

[10] Forms of publication: anything from a children's magazine to a class bulletin board, or even having a paper shown to the class by overhead projector. I am told that Professor Macrorie, of Western Michigan, uses a bulletin board in the hall outside his office. Students feel free to mark up the posted papers.

# 14

## The Place of Rhetoric in the Preparation
## of Composition Teachers

WALLACE W. DOUGLAS

*We* are all aware, I am sure, that the word *rhetoric* has lately enjoyed an interesting change of status, at least in the lexicon of those who look after the future of English. From almost the lowest estimation of learning, as a word carrying comparatively heavy suggestions of equivocation and pedantry, *rhetoric*—the word—has become one of our most powerful symbols.

I suppose *rhetoric* gives most comfort by reminding us English teachers that we are somehow, however loosely and distantly, connected with a trade and a profession whose history reaches from the assistant in Speech or English 101 backward to Isocrates and beyond, to Gorgias and even to Tisias and Corax, to say nothing of the contentious and loquacious characters in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, who, we are told, whether on the plains of windy Troy or on high Olympus, practiced oratory before our subject was invented.

But more practically, rhetoric—the subject now, not the word—fills what many of us feel to be a desperate need. That is, it gives a content to the composition class. Now no longer must we suppose, as Theodore Morrison used to at Harvard, that the content of composition "must in a real sense be the student's content." Nor need we follow him into subjection and inanity by supposing that

> A student should explain, argue, summarize, analyze, criticize; report scenes, describe characters, try to create the impression and atmosphere of a home town, or the life of the people he knows. He should read books, present their content accurately, compare them with other books, distinguish between different views, and advance his own opinions. He should, in short, do as much as he can of the work of an intelligent reflective mind. He should know, feel, and judge, and he should give orderly expression to the upshot of his knowledge, his feeling, his judgment.

Ours no longer to suffer. For now we can assert that we find our con-

tent in the theory of rhetoric as its principles can be seen to be realized in the effective writing of students. Thus, presumably, we will challenge our students. And to challenge is one of the things we English teachers want most these days.

As challenges to the intellect and comprehension, the documents of rhetoric are indeed very powerful, not to say formidable; and it is going to be interesting to see how they survive contact with the realities of the classroom. At a guess, unless linguistics proves too enticing, they will have a fairly prolonged life. So common prudence demands that we have a look at rhetoric to see what it is that we are being asked to take up. I think our look can be a fairly simple one, involving us only slightly in the great polemic and theoretical statements, somewhat more extensively in the practical actions of the rhetoricians: what their ends were, what the means they developed for achieving them.

In other words, for our purposes, in planning how to meet the challenge of those urging the New Rhetoric upon us, we must, of course, consider the body of rhetorical theory, which is mostly about ·hetoricians, either attacking or defending them, under the guise of describing their subject. But at the same time we must remember that rhetoricians were teachers, like us; and like us, they had collections of classroom exercises, more or less sequentially arranged, to provide for increment and development. And we need to look at these exercises too, not simply as we find them in modern school and college textbooks, but also in their own historical context. As Paul Shorey once said, "We are freed from rhetoric only by study of its history." I would add, "only by study of its history under the proper aspect," which is by no means that of eternity.

## Origins and Development of Classical Rhetoric

As we know, rhetoric, the systematic description of the successful conventions of speech making, was developed in Sicily in the second quarter of the fifth century B.C. It is said that the first manual of the art was written by one Corax; his pupil Tisias also wrote on the subject, basing his work on that of his master. Through Tisias we reach the major figures, for he was the teacher of Gorgias, Isocrates, and Lysias. (So OCD; Quint., III, i, 8 ff. says G. was a pupil [discipulus] of Empedocles; OCD, under Empedocles, calls G. his disciple.)

Corax's manual epitomized the practices in pleading that had been developed in Sicily for the litigations over property during and following the various revolutions of the fifth century. Treating of forensic speeches

only, Corax, not surprisingly, defined rhetoric as simply, the art of persuasion. And his analysis of the means of persuading or convincing popular groups sitting in judgment seems to have been what made rhetoric useful in fifth century Athens. For it was introduced there shortly after the legislation of 461-62 limiting the power of the Areopagus and establishing a system of popular juries [*dikasteria*] with power to determine both law and fact in cases. There came to be thereafter great interest in what we would call *oratory*, in the pejorative sense of the word. (OCD, Kennedy, pp. 26-28, Marrou, p. 89.)

We may recall Aristotle's complaint that the manuals of rhetoric dealt not at all with the essentials of the subject, matters of proof, but only with externals:

> The arousing of prejudice, pity, anger, and similar emotions has nothing to do with the essential facts [of a case], but is merely a personal appeal to the man who is judging the case.

In the lines that follow these, Aristotle seems to be comparing the practices of the dikasteria somewhat unfavorably to those of the Areopagus, as if he were aware of the democratic connections of rhetoric. (I, i 1454$^a$.)

In Quintilian's discussion of definitions of rhetoric (II, xv) there is suggestive evidence about the base on which systematic rhetoric rested. I cite Quintilian because he is late, compendious, and generally opposed to sophistic utilitarianism. His discussion seems to point to his own failure, and Cicero's before him, to make the Isocratean tradition attractive to practical young Romans. Quintilian's authorities, who run from Gorgias to Cicero and Cornelius Celsus, make a long enough list to support his evident impression that he was being exhaustive.

The definitions fall into two classes, which may be called generalist and practical (or particularist?). As Quintilian says, "For some hold that rhetoric is concerned with everything, while some restrict its activity to politics." Quintilian himself and two or three of his authorities (Stoic in orientation) are among the generalists, defining rhetoric as the science of speaking well, apparently without any limitation as to subject or occasion. Others in this group make rhetoric the art of speaking in a persuasive manner. Aristotle was equally a generalist in his famous definition of rhetoric as "the power of finding the allowed or accepted means of persuasion [in any subject or case], though perhaps not so completely so as is sometimes thought" (I, 2, 1355$^b$).

But quite as many of Quintilian's authorities tie rhetoric very closely to political and forensic discussion or argument. Quintilian cites Aristotle's pupil Theodectes: the end of rhetoric is the "leading of man by

the power of speech to the conclusions desired by the orator." He finds various other relatively minor figures who take the same position; for example, to one Ariston, "Rhetoric is the science of seeing and uttering what ought to be said on political questions in language that is likely to prove persuasive to the people."

Quintilian criticizes these definitions, but his reason is not the limitation to politics or other subjects. When he argues it is about the use of the term *persuasion*, the implied relativism of some of the definitions, or the question of whether rhetoric is an art or a power. It is interesting that he does not reject an Aristotelian ascription for the treatise of Theodectes; indeed, he rather favors it, as if he saw no conflict between the definitions of master and pupil.

### Relationship of Politics and Rhetoric

On the other hand, it cannot quite be said that Quintilian takes for granted the tie between politics and rhetoric. In II, xxi, he rejects the connection: "I hold that the material of rhetoric is composed of everything that may be placed before it as a subject for speech." He cites the *Phaedrus* (261A): "Must not the art of rhetoric, taken as a whole, be a kind of influencing of the mind by means of words, not only in courts of law and other public gatherings, but in private also? And must it not be the same art that is concerned with great issues and small . . .?"

But in this passage, as always, Socrates is arguing against a conventional position; here the one expressed by Phaedrus, that "it is principally . . . to lawsuits that an art of speaking and writing is applied. . . ." Moreover Socrates' point seems to be as much about the place where issues are discussed as about the content of the issues. And is not the operative word *issues?* That is, does not Socrates take for granted that rhetoric has to do with the kind of questions that admit of arguments on two sides at least? Compare Aristotle (II, 18, 1391$^b$):

> The use of persuasive speech is to lead to decisions. (When we know a thing and have decided about it, there is no further use in speaking about it.) This is so even if one is addressing a single person and urging him to do something, as when we scold a man for his conduct or try to change his views; the single person is as much your "judge" as if he were one of many.

A connection of sorts between rhetoric and policy is implied by the classification of speeches that was common in the rhetorical treatises. As I noted earlier, the manuals of Corax and Tisias treated forensic speaking alone; and most rhetoricians followed their practice, presumably because forensic speeches were, from their very nature, the ones most easily re-

duced to rules. After Aristotle, according to Quintilian (III, iv), "all the most eminent authorities among ancient writers" added deliberative and epideictic speeches to forensic, to make a threefold classification. Quintilian notes that "certain Greeks" and Cicero argued that the kinds of speeches are almost numberless. But Quintilian will have none of this and, as an example, quickly reduces one such amplification (Anaximenes') from seven kinds to the classical three. As far as that goes, Aristotle seems in the beginning of Book II at least to obscure, if he does not collapse, his own distinction between deliberative and forensic speeches, by suggesting that the object of both is judgment or decision.

So we are left with the impression that in the discussions of these eminent authorities, rhetoric was never far removed from its origin in actions of recovery. Neither associating it with politics nor extending its area to anything that is subject for speech quite purged rhetoric of its connection with forensic persuasion. It is reasonably clear that in classical thought, the defining content of rhetoric was its prescriptions for successful arguments on problematic questions having neither certain nor necessary answers. Probably this fact forced Aristotle into inventing the term *enthymeme* for the rhetorical syllogism; as he says,

> There are few facts of the "necessary" type that can form the basis of rhetorical syllogisms. Most of the things about which we make decisions, and into which therefore we inquire, present us with alternative possibilities. For it is about our actions that we deliberate and inquire, and all our actions have a contingent character; hardly any of them are determined by necessity. . . . It is evident, therefore, that the propositions forming the basis of enthymemes, though some of them may be "necessary," will most of them be only usually true.

At any rate, whatever the refinements in definitions and classification that the rhetoricians indulged themselves in, there is no evidence that they were thereby led to any accompanying changes, still less developments, in the communication problems they discussed. There remained those associated with persuading popular audiences to make decisions on questions which, in general, did not allow of necessary answers.

We may think Wayne Booth harsh when he suggests that the meaning of rhetoric is "whatever men do to change each other's minds without giving good reasons for change." (*PMLA*, LXXX [1965], 2.) But is he any more so than Aristotle, in his remarks about the usefulness of rhetoric (I, 1, 1355ª)?

> Moreover before some audiences not even the possession of the exactest knowledge will make it easy for what we say to produce conviction. For argument based on knowledge implies instruction, and there are people

whom one cannot instruct. Here, then, we must use as our modes of persuasion and argument, notions possessed by everybody, as we observed in the *Topics* when dealing with the way to handle a popular audience.

I am not, I must hasten to say, trying to exorcise the devil sophistic. I am not rehearsing either Socrates' comparison of rhetoric, cooking, and make-up as forms of flattery, where indeed he calls rhetoric "the counterpart of cookery in the soul" (*Gorgias*, 465); or his conclusion, at the end of his third interchange with Gorgias (459), that

> . . . there is no need for rhetoric to know the facts at all, for it has hit upon a means of persuasion that enables us to appear, in the eyes of the ignorant, to know more than those who really know.

Rhetorical theory may indeed be but the fine expression of the quarrelsome and litigious spirit of the people of Athens, mediated by "*le clair genie grec*," (Marrou, p. 89). Perhaps it was, as Marrou says (*Ibid.*), little more than a codification, condensed and perfected, of the practices that wandering Sophists taught to young Athenians anxious for success as "citizen-speakers." (Cf. Wallace, *English Journal*, LIII [1964], 1.) Or—to use Aristotle's harshness again (I, ii, 1357ᵃ)—perhaps the duty of rhetoric was no more than

> . . . to deal with such matters as we deliberate upon, but without systematic rules, in the hearing of persons who cannot take a general view of [an argument having] many stages, or follow a lengthy chain of argument.

But none of these considerations is now to the point, for I am thinking now as a composition teacher, a technician interested in nothing more than the problem of making the teaching of composition as little trying for both teachers and students as possible. And my point is not rhetoric's duplicity but rather its practicality.

### Significance for Composition Teachers Today

For our purposes, as composition teachers in today's schools, the significance of rhetoric is precisely that it *did* begin in quite a narrow and restricted set of problems in communication and en-formed discourse, that it *was* originally only a recording of what various specialists or, in modern terminology, techincians had found on the basis of their own practice and observation to be successful, that is accepted, means of persuasion in pleadings before popular judicial bodies. As a system of education, a curriculum (which is what it became), rhetoric can quite properly be seen as having a very pronounced technological and vocational character. Marrou (p. 386) says that by the time of the Empire, Roman rhetorical

training was wholly directed to producing trial lawyers or specialists who constructed legal and other arguments for the former to use in court. For us, both the value and the weaknesses of rhetoric may be found in its extreme practicality.

Let me take the weaknesses first. They are less important than the values, and though complicated enough, perhaps they can be disposed of summarily without much discussion. First, it seems to me, is the danger that we will let the authority of the classical lead us into concentrating our own regard, and our teaching attention too, on rather large questions of logic and morals; analysis of the argument, it is called. A minor result of this preoccupation may be that we will bemuse ourselves into thinking that we are not supposed to teach composition directly, but are rather to turn out (no doubt in some high Roman fashion) honest men skilled in speaking, such as were sought by Cato and Quintilian, or, in a modern version, (Wallace, pp. 1, 2), men who are exact, deliberative, and ready and responsible in using their native language.

There is a slightly more serious possibility if we become too familiar with the rhetorical topics, or conventional lines of argument, and with the existence of the exercises in simple logical processes, such as cause and effect, comparison, circumstance, use of example, citation of authority, which were given a substantial part in the *progymnasmata* (the work prior to the rhetor's studies). Then we may devote all our time in all grades to seeking ways to get papers out of students and thereby to test their command of logic and argument. But it should be remembered that in Rome, the declamations, from which our "papers" descend, were assigned to students only in the last stages of their training, after they had spent many years in the merest mechanical exercises, of which those on logic in the *progymnasmata* are types.

Most serious is the fact that, because of the ancient content of rhetoric, even modern papers of opinion seem to have to be written in one mode of thought, on one kind of problem. Such papers illustrate very well the significance of Aristotle's contention that rhetoric generally concerns persuasion not demonstration, and that its subject is the probable or possible not the certain, and that its arguments are "notions possessed by everybody" or "generally accepted principles" (I, i, $1355^2$).

On this point we may compare a modern rhetorician urging certain changes in the form and content of our teaching. We have neglected, he says (Wallace, p. 2), "the arts of invention," which he defines as "the ways of finding, recalling, and selecting ideas that are appropriate to a given occasion." And these ideas, it appears, are pretty much those de-

tailed by Aristotle in the first book of the *Rhetoric*, where he is analyzing the subject matter of deliberative or public oratory. Our modern rhetorician gives them as (p. 3):

> ... the ideas and statements revealed in the enduring and unresolved problems of our civilization and culture. They are the problems of war and peace, of race and creed, of poverty, wealth, and population, of democracy and communism. They are the problems of religion and morality, of political and economic life, of education and learning.

Later (p. 4) this rhetorician tells us, if I follow him, that the solutions of these problems (or the arguments about them) contain two kinds of value judgments, one of which is unique to individual cases and experiences, the other of more general reference.

> Yet in each case, also, one encounters old and familiar ideas and statements. They are the ones that occur whenever human beings must make choices, whenever they are confronted with alternative possibilities and must come to a decision and must justify the decision. Their choices are governed by their values, and when they explain and justify their choices, their statements consist of value-judgments (explicit or implicit), the practical reasons on which judgment is grounded, and appropriate information and facts.

I would not want to give less than their due importance to "the enduring and unresolved problems of our civilization and culture," or to the "old and familiar ideas and statements . . . that occur whenever human beings make choices." But it does cross my mind that, after two thousand years of discussing such problems in such terms, rhetoricians might at least begin to wonder about their work.

## Need for Concern with Central Issue

In this plea to restore rhetoric to its ancient place in our trade, there is, so far as I am able to tell, not the least concern for what I suppose might be the central interest of a modern rhetoric. To put it briefly, if we are going to use rhetoric for ethical or political improvement, if we are going to follow Isocrates rather than the Sophists, we must try to change the frame of reference in which rhetoric is discussed.

First, we should have to think in terms of a different class of questions than those which dominated the analysis and program of the classical rhetoricians, and perhaps also of a different formulation of their questions. The difference would be in what might be called the testability of the question. "Is public relief good or bad?" is a sort of nonquestion; and even "Is public relief necessary?" is not much better. Nor is there

a real question in "Are present relief allowances adequate?" But there is a question in "Do present relief allowances give recipients enough money to provide themselves and their families the recommended number of calories per day for persons of their ages, occupations, and states of health?"

With new questions, we would be led to thinking in terms of a new audience—if not an instructed one, at least one capable of understanding demonstration. With such an audience in mind, we would want to spend more time on teaching the formulation of proper questions and less on the construction of topic or thesis sentences. We would also have to begin to consider the nature of responsible and warrantable statements (not arguments), the various methods of gathering evidence, and of testing it by criteria somewhat broader than those of dialectic, and the forms into which conclusions and evidence can be put for purposes of public communication.

In a word, we need to cut the ancient ties between rhetoric and opinion and persuasion and establish some between it and fact and demonstration. Instead of submerging ourselves in thought, perhaps we might begin to ask some questions about the material bases of thought, the conditions to which it stands as a sort of superstructure, and the extremely complex relationship that exists between thought and the various kinds of reality.

At least as transmitted to us by nineteenth century British scholarship, "le clair genie grec" does not seem to have had much time for such questions. In classical rhetoric, because of its origin and development, they could hardly have been raised, let alone discussed. And in our time many have thought this a sufficient and necessary reason for saying that classical rhetoric was well rejected and forgotten by the composition teacher. It is, however, a curious fact that exercises very similar to those we now find in our textbooks (for elementary school, high school, and college composition alike) also appear in the progymnasmata of the rhetorical schools, as described by Quintilian. (See Hermogenes, second century; Aphthonius, fourth century; and Rainolde, sixteenth century.) And I think it is in these exercises, properly understood and placed, that a value for classical rhetoric may still be found.

In his more pedagogical moments, Quintilian allowed the end of rhetoric to be that of training young men in "the art of producing and delivering orations." The means were to teach them the directions, the recipes for the various kinds of speeches and occasions. Certain speeches had been successful. These speeches had certain observable characteristics of material, composition, and arrangement. Presumably their success was ac-

counted for by the characteristics. Other speeches so designed would be successful too; or if they weren't, then either the case was flawed or the speaker was inept. The art was not in question.

### Scope of Classical Instruction in Rhetoric

Following this theory, most of rhetorical instruction seems to have consisted of explication and critical commentary along with mechanical drills. The method was not very much different from that presently in vogue, except that little attention was given to either creativity or communication. In the earliest stages, a student would listen to the grammaticus read and comment on passages from literary works; the student's writing consisted of exercises in retelling fables, paraphrasing poetry, expanding maxims and proverbs; he may also have had some work in very simple logical processes, such as cause and effect, comparison, circumstances, citations of authority, use of examples.

Even when the student had progressed to working with a rhetor, the emphasis remained the same. The rhetor pronounced and analyzed speeches, often his own. The student practiced summaries of plots, historical events, lives; analyses of legendary or real occurrences; amplification or explanation of popular beliefs; and so on. He would also discuss the great general ideas which were imagined to explain human behavior, and he would begin studying the analysis of cases and their presentation. Finally, in the declamations, the student could show off how well he had learned and could manage the conventions of material, style, and form that he had accumulated during his training.

In a very real sense, the teaching method of the rhetorician seems to have been to stock his students' minds with the material and form of the various kinds of speeches, and to train them to make ready and present use thereof by finding "that which may be pertinent to the purpose which [they might have] in consideration." (I am paraphrasing Bacon on "invention," in the *Advancement*, II, xiii, 6.) And there will be many, I suppose, who will suppose that I have given a sufficient indictment of ancient rhetoric, which will justify their imagined rejection of it as a thing of merest pedantry and the worst sort of classical conventionalism.

But this is to miss the point, I am afraid. What the classical rhetoricians saw, the basic observation from which all their practice stemmed, is that a child does not learn "to write," nor does he learn "writing" either. There are many things he does learn, but "writing" is not among them. He may learn at least some of the signs of the prestige dialect (other things being equal), he may learn the qualities of diction and

syntax characterizing some one or several styles, he may learn certain patterns for achieving sentence variety, as it is called, he may learn the conventions of structure found in some one or several of the kinds of en-formed discourse, he may learn the types of material appropriate to some few different occasions and purposes. How much he learns depends on how much his teacher knows to teach, how extensive the requirements of the curriculum are. But in all cases, the child learns, if at all, quite specific skills, to use the modern cant term, which are skills having as their objects the patterns of formal discourse.

The great advantage that the classical rhetoricians had over their suc-cessors—from the eighteenth century or even the Renaissance to the present—was that they could tell their students how to make some particular things. They did not have to work with unanalyzable terms such as *writing* or *learning to write*. When Socrates analogized writing and cookery, he was not just being whimsical. Grounding his figure was the prevalent Greek habit of looking at art as a making, a bringing of material into form by means of an agent. Working from this assumption, the classical rhetorician could show his students how to take parts and put them together according to recognized schemes. This being so, he could work out a real curriculum, for he knew what was simple and what complex, what was primary and what advanced. The essential and con-trolling purpose of his curriculum was to prepare his students to write a certain kind of speech, not "speeches in general" but the kind of speeches required by a rather limited number of communication situations, all involving establishing "cases" before audiences most of whose members had been trained in precisely the techniques that the speaker was using.

We may, I suppose, object to the conventionality of the material and exercises used in this system, as having too little concern for creativity and individual differences. But as we move toward developing a genuine curriculum for teaching composition, we may find in the old rhetoric adequately understood sound roots for the new.

# 15

## Literature and Composition in the Elementary Grades

### Eldonna L. Evertts

The interrelationship of the language arts has long been stressed by authorities in English and education; yet, too often the elementary teacher still tries to separate the language arts and to teach the skills of each area independently. However, if the nature of English and the role of language learning, as well as competence in the use of language, were really understood, administrators and teachers planning curricula would recognize this interrelationship and also plan concrete activities for it. Only recently, for example, educators have begun to sense the importance of beginning and continuing with oral language throughout the school program. The "story time" now introduces basic literary concepts to the elementary pupil, so that these, too, will help in the pupil's composition.

All levels of instruction are indeed reflecting an increased emphasis on the importance of oral English. In the past, elementary teachers have probably given some consideration to oral language, but they have not really thought seriously of what this means in curriculum organization. If teachers were to accept the contention made by Ruth Strickland that no one will read well or write well who has not learned to talk well, then they would make sure that all phases of English instruction included both an oral and aural approach.[1] Walter Loban suggests that reforms in language arts curricula may be expected to reflect the powerful link between oral language and reading and writing skills.[2]

To prepare children for the enjoyment of literature and written communication, one must begin with oral language and continue to parallel the oral and the written. Oral language and written communication must be considered together as a sequential English program from kindergarten through high school and even into college.

Recent research shows that boys and girls can form basic sentence pat-

terns in oral conversation when they enter the first grade.[3] As pupils mature in the use of language, they learn how to vary the construction or components within the fixed slots or elements comprising the basic patterns. That is, students illustrate their ability to handle language by expansion within the subject, verb phrase, and object or by subordination and coordination, rather than mere extension of sentence length and the use of a typical sentence pattern. Since children first gain control over language by oral experimentation before entering the classroom, is it not logical that they need to continue learning through · experimentation with language? Even in the study of foreign languages, the approach has become an oral-aural approach rather than a solo task focused upon visual recognition.

### Oral Language as the Base of Writing

Before a child can be expected to write expanded sentences, he should have the opportunity to "try" the sentences orally. At the primary level much more can be done than has been done with beginning chart stories written in the language of the child who dictates the story; there should be no restraint in either sentence structure or vocabulary. Recently a student teacher took her class to view an excavation and to watch the steam shovel at work. The children were delighted and were impatient to discuss what they had seen. But when they started to write the story, the supervising teacher restricted the vocabulary to that of the reading series. So instead of, "We saw a steam shovel," one line of the chart read, "We saw something."

In contrast, consider this first grade story. The pupils had listened to "The Story of the First Butterflies" and "The Story of the First Woodpecker," which represent the simplest kind of myths. This particular class loved the "pourquoi" stories explaining the world about them. One child, with some help from classmates, told the original story that follows, illustrating his concept of a myth. (The teacher, as secretary, wrote the story exactly as it was told to her. This technique is used by all good teachers at all levels of instruction: to accept the child's contribution during the priceless moments of creativity and leave the editing and correction until the pupils ask for ways to express ideas clearly and accurately in written form.)

#### THE STORY OF THE FIRST JACK-O-LANTERN

Someone found some seeds. They didn't know what kind of seed it was. They said, "We'll plant it and find out."

They planted it.  It grew and grew.  They gave it some water.  It grew into a vine.  One day later a yellow flower grew on it.

A little, thin round thing came where the flower was.  There wasn't anything left of the flower.  The green ball turned into a yellow ball. A man gave it the name of pumpkin.  He decided to make eyes, nose, and mouth on it.  He found seeds inside.  He planted them.  They grew.  They had baby seeds again.  After they had so many seeds, they gave them to all the world.  They had Halloween with them.[4]

As teachers work with the young child who is using substandard dialect, they are finding that the child must become familiar with the standard dialect before he can logically be expected to speak, dictate, or read in the accepted dialect.  At times, the teacher may use the child's dialect to enable him to realize that his speech can be recorded and then read by others.  There comes a time during the child's experience with dictation or with his own writing when the teacher can show that there are more ways than one to say something, and that one must then select the appropriate form for a specific occasion or for a specific audience. An abstract knowledge about dialect is useless; the ability to use more than a single variety of language indicates linguistic command.  Of course, learning does not result because the teacher once illustrated an alternate choice which could be identified as standard language usage. Teaching and learning a new dialect involve many experiences—a variety of ways to make the "new" sound natural to the child.  Teachers must be sensitive not only to the child's desire to learn more about controlling his language patterns but also the rate at which this learning can be economically or efficiently accomplished.  Teachers must use a light touch; they must beware of making too much ado about form or usage when the child is deeply occupied with recording content, ideas, content, or emotions and feelings.

Together teachers and pupils can explore the manipulation and handling of language.  This exploration can be oral as pupils rephrase sentences or substitute words and phrases for the ideas they are expressing. They could begin with a sentence such as this:  "The girl went down the street."  The teacher will ask the children what word or words could be substituted for "went" which would help them visualize how the girl went down the street.  The pupils might suggest:  "The girl skipped and hopped down the street."  This sentence could be expanded to: "The new girl who lives next to us skipped down the street" or "The new girl with the tired puppy slowly sauntered along the cool, shady street."

While she was reading *Little Tim and the Brave Sea Captain* by Ed-

ward Ardizzone, one teacher tried to help pupils become aware of the many ways a single idea could be expressed and to experiment with varying sentence patterns. She began with the sentence in the book, "In the middle of the night was a terrible crash." The sentences which the class composed from this idea were these:

In the night there was a crash. It seemed to be about midnight.
A boat crashed on some rocks in the middle of the night.
A terrible crash happened in the middle of the night.
A terrible crash was heard about midnight.
About midnight a terrible crash was heard.[5]

Ruth Strickland has investigated most carefully the relationship between listening and oral reading, silent reading, and spoken sentence patterns. The ability to listen correlates highly with the degree of competence in these variables. Pupils who listen effectively are also able to read well orally, score high on tests of reading comprehension and vocabulary, and have mastered the use of the common patterns of sentence structure. Her findings would indicate that teachers could help pupils gain power in all the related language subjects by supplying suitable material for listening, and the field of literature has much to offer that is worthy of "listening time." Through listening a child notices how others use language. Then he is ready to speak and write—to experiment with language on his own.

Recent research has reported many other important findings with accompanying implications for teaching and curriculum planning; now it is time for teachers and administrators to use these ideas creatively as they begin experimenting with new techniques relating and incorporating more oral language into the language arts curriculum. They must rid themselves, in light of current knowledge, of binding outdated concepts. They must be encouraged to try new ways of teaching in their own classrooms. They must be permitted individual experimentation and not be forced to transplant artificially the ideas or methods of others. Teaching is, after all, a personal act with the principal determining factors being the teacher and the pupil. However, the teacher must be informed as to what are academically respectable ideas and what are educationally sound practices; then he may apply these to the instructional task.

Sylvia Ashton-Warner, in her refreshing book, *Teacher*, gives us this insight: "We don't waste enough in school. We hoard our old ideas or charts to be used again and again like stale bread. Ideas are never the same again, even those of the masters; even if the only change is in our

own mood of reapproach. Yet there's never a shortage of ideas if the stimulus is there. Waste the old paper and waste the old pictures and waste the old ideas. It's tidier and simpler."[6]

Sometimes teachers preserve too much when they should be trying to use better approaches and better organization. These teachers resemble a certain recluse living in New York City. After her death the police went into her overcrowded apartment. They found things neat and orderly, although she seemed to have saved everything. In one closet they discovered the acme of orderliness and preservation—a box labeled "String too short to use."

### Structure in Literature and Composition

Before coming to school, many fortunate young children have listened to mothers or grandmothers read or tell stories. Through listening, these children have learned to differentiate a story, a poem, a Mother Goose rhyme. They have captured the delight of the old folk tales and the Hollywood versions of these same stories. Since children can also learn how written language functions and in particular how words and phrases are put together to form sentences, paragraphs, and finally a complete story; there is much value in reading quantities of stories, poems, and books aloud in the classroom. While teachers have often read stories and books for general enjoyment or relaxation, they have not realized that quality oral reading and interpretation of literature can be a vital part of the English program.

What better way to help pupils learn about their language than to hear it read aloud in the classroom? What better way to learn about the structure of stories and plot motifs than through listening to the stories that illustrate these principles? Plot is basic to a story; it rises from conflict which is favorably or unfavorably resolved. When a pupil is asked to write a story, he must become increasingly able to handle plot development if his story is to be more than a mere recital of events. Pupils cannot apply a broad generalization to plot structure until they have had sufficient exposure to what constitutes plot or a basic structural plot motif. While the differences between stories must not be ignored or forgotten, pupils need some understanding of what James R. Squire calls "form consciousness," which is basic to the reading and understanding of literature and to the composing process.[7]

Edward Rosenheim has stressed the idea that *a story is made*.[8] The author not only tells a story but he also creates a work which follows certain conventions and fulfills certain expectations. Then if a pupil is

asked to create, he must understand how literary plots are put together so that he can make his own story. He needs to understand the literary structures which he can use to convey his ideas; he needs to know what is meant by a "story" before he can compose a "story." Later he can distinguish a chronological series of events which he may have experienced from a "story" based upon these events.

Literary criticism can approach plot structures from various points of view, not necessarily compatible. However, the following is one system of classification of basic structural plot motifs of folk tales which has been successfully used with elementary pupils in an experimental curriculum study conducted at the University of Nebraska.[9] According to this classification, there are four basic plot motifs for folk tales and two for fables. Actually stories are rarely based upon a single motif. The motifs which follow merely serve as a central description upon which the individual story can be superimposed.

### Plot Motifs for Folk Tales

1. The journey from home to isolation. This motif seldom exists alone; in many folk tales the central character leaves his home and enters the world of danger, excitement, frustration, or adventure. Upon entering this cold, impartial world, the central character leaves the warmth, comfort, and security of his home environment. Sleeping Beauty only travels upstairs, but she leaves her secure home and enters partial and then complete isolation.

2. The journey from home to confrontation with a monster. In this motif the central character leaves a secure home and meets a monster—an animal, person or element of nature—which either destroys the central character or is overcome by the hero. This motif can be illustrated by "Little Red Riding Hood," "The Story of the Three Little Pigs," or "The Story of the Three Bears."

3. The rescue from a harsh home and the miraculous creation of a secure home. While the previous motifs began with a secure home, this motif involves a harsh, cruel, or unloving home. The central character leaves the harsh home, goes into the outside world and somehow miraculously finds a new home, superior in countless ways to the original home. "Cinderella" and "Mother Holle" are both illustrations of this motif.

4. The conflict between the wise beast and the foolish beast. In this motif there are two or more central characters which possess contrasting qualities with the action centering on these differences. The stepsisters

in "Cinderella" and "Mother Holle" illustrate this motif. One folk tale may have elements of more than a single plot motif; it is the combination and variations which make each story unique. The wise beast-foolish beast motif, it may be noted, is commonly used in fables, as indicated in the next section.

### Plot Motifs for Fables

1. Single character and single incident. This structural pattern of a fable expresses a moral lesson through a single impersonal character involved in a single incident. "The Fox and the Grapes" illustrates this pattern.

2. Wise beast-foolish beast. This structural pattern may involve a single incident or parallel incidents in which the foolish beast (or character) seems to have the advantage, but the qualities of the wise beast result in his receiving reward or victory, with the qualities of the foolish beast causing his downfall. This plot pattern is recognizable in "The Lion and the Mouse," "The Hare and the Tortoise," and "The Ant and the Grasshopper."

I will illustrate how an understanding of these plot patterns was used by a second grader when writing his own composition. The story begins in a secure home; the central character, Janet, takes a journey into the outside world where she meets a "friendly" monster; and at the end of the story we find that Janet has returned to her own safe and secure home. One can see elements of a number of stories which have been recently read to this group. Like the little boy in *The Bears on Hemlock Mountain,* by Alice Dalgliesh, Janet goes on an errand for her mother; the three rabbits have human characteristics like those in the *Just So Stories* by Rudyard Kipling; and the ending is similar to the one found in *And To Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street* by Dr. Seuss, which brings one quickly back from the imaginative world to reality.

#### THE THREE RABBITS

Once upon a time there lived a little girl named Janet. Her mother said, "Janet, will you go to the little store to get some things we need?" "Yes," said Janet, "what do we need?" Mother said, "Janet, we need some sugar and a loaf of bread and a pound of sugar and some milk." "Oh," said Janet, "I'll go get the things." Then Janet started to go to the store. On Janet's way to the store she saw a little house. There was a little rabbit playing in the yard doing tricks and a mother rabbit watering the garden and a daddy rabbit filling the car. Janet made friends with the rabbits and talked to them. Soon it was getting dark out. The rabbits said that Janet could stay for the

night. In the morning Janet went to the store and got the things and after she got the things she started home again. When she got home her mother was happy to see her but her mother wanted to know where she stayed overnight. Then Janet told her mother the whole story.[10]

In directing attention to plot structure, the teacher helps the child inductively; she plans carefully the stories she will read and the questions she will ask.

### Repetitive Elements of Style

The next concept the teacher may wish to explore concerns the incremental patterns of repetition which occur in folk tales. Stories which are episodic—the plot structure involves a series of independent events which together comprise a single work—frequently make use of verbal repetition: phrases and parallel incidents are repeated. The repetition in episodic stories entertains and gets attention; it also contributes to the meaning of the story. Young children delight in these repetitive elements of style and are able to recite or tell many stories after hearing them only once or twice. Pupils can be led to recognize the repetitive elements in "Mother Holle," a story which contrasts two trips to the bottom of a well, and the contrasting description of the stepsisters in "Cinderella."

After pupils have discovered the devices of plot and repetition and realize that stories are "made" by the author, they often use these devices in their own writings or find additional examples in their books. Teachers should not expect a pupil to use a device in his own stories immediately after class discussion. Rather, teachers should respond favorably to those who have attempted to use a literary device which could be appropriately incorporated in the story and to continue to read other stories illustrating the concepts that are being developed. It is tragic to see pupils struggle with a writing device they do not understand or which is inappropriate for the topic or idea they are trying to express.

Stories can be used as models to help pupils build their own compositions *after* the pupils have had a rich experience with literature. Many literary selections should be enjoyed before the generalizations are exposed. An understanding of plot structure gives a new dimension to enjoyment of children's literature. One first grade teacher helped her pupils to observe the use of repetition as a structural device by telling and retelling "The Little Red Hen," "The Three Billy Goats Gruff," and "The Gingerbread Boy." These stories were told orally, and some chil-

dren enjoyed taperecording and listening to their own retelling of these stories over and over. At the same time the group studied "The House That Jack Built." Then, hoping to get a composition modeled after it, the teacher began by introducing a picture of a birthday cake with a lighted candle and expected the children to mention the ingredients of the cake, such as, "This is the cow that gave the milk that went in the cake that Susie baked." However, the members of the class had their own ideas which, by the way, the teacher readily accepted. The composition, as the children told it, indicates that they understood the use of repetition. They made a long, thin picture with a birthday cake at the top. Underneath it was a candle, then a boy, a lady, a young man, and an old man.

Here is the composition:

> This is the cake that Susy baked.
>
> This is the candle on top of the cake
> That Susy baked.
>
> This is the boy who blew out the candle
> On top of the cake that Susy baked.
>
> This is the mother who spanked the boy
> Who blew out the candle
> On top of the cake that Susy baked.
>
> This is the father who kissed the mother
> Who spanked the boy
> Who blew out the candle
> On top of the cake that Susy baked.
>
> This is the grandpa who visited the father
> Who kissed the mother
> Who spanked the boy
> Who blew out the candle
> On top of the cake that Susy baked.[11]

### The Fable: Example of Learning to Use a Form

The teachers who have worked closely with primary children frequently find that fables are difficult for young pupils to understand. Fables as a type of literature have a distinct form and contain highly intellectual qualities. Even though the fables use animals for characters and are very brief, they present an abstraction, moral, or sermon which young children are reluctant to accept. Abstract ideas are presented strikingly and with force by employing flat characters which represent a single quality.

Fables can probably best be presented to elementary pupils as short stories, one at a time, throughout the year. Before reading a new fable, the teacher should identify the selection as a fable, one type of literary form, and mention the titles of other fables which have been read. If the teacher reads books containing a single fable, such as *Once a Mouse* by Marcia Brown or *Chanticleer and the Fox* by Barbara Cooney or the books by Katherine Evans, these can be placed on the library table where pupils can handle the books, thus permitting those who are ready and have the maturity for the abstract concepts to react individually to the book. From a gradual introduction of the fable throughout the early grades and listening to tales like "Chanticleer and the Fox" from Chaucer and "The Bremen Town Musicians," the pupils can be prepared to enjoy the elements of a satiric fable in which human vices and follies are ridiculed or scorned, as in *Winnie-the-Pooh* by A. A. Milne, at a later grade level. As upper elementary pupils listen to *The Bidpai Fables* and the *Jataka Tales* from India and Japan, they can relate these fables to those they have heard in early grades, such as the fables of Aesop. These understandings of the qualities of classical antiquity and an understanding of the classical fable form can then be applied to *The Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame, a tale representing the good and bad in modern society. Pupils will be unable to understand many of the classics and selections of quality literature at the high school level if they are not given a broad background in understanding the fable form through a firsthand experience with many fables.

May Hill Arbuthnot equates writing an original fable to a mathematical procedure.[12] She suggests selecting some animal character and a moral such as, "Pride goeth before a fall." If a rabbit is chosen, he cannot be a well-rounded individual with only one weakness; rather, he must be all weakness—and in this case the weakness is *pride*. So the mathematical equation becomes: Proud Rabbit $+ X$ (single episode) $=$ Pride goeth before a fall. The writer must solve for X by finding an episode to explain the moral.

Teachers who wish to experiment with fables in their classrooms will find these seven steps for presentation and writing of fables helpful:

1. Read many fables scattered throughout several months.
2. Review the easier fables and those liked by the children. Write the lesson or moral on the chalk board.
3. List other lessons on the chalk board which could appear in a fable.
4. Select one lesson from either group of morals and write a fable together in class.

5. Let pupils select a lesson or moral from these on the board or suggest a new moral and tell how a story or fable could present the idea.
6. Let pupils work in groups or committees and write fables with one of the group acting as secretary or scribe. Go over the fables together in class.
7. Let pupils write their own fables after selecting a moral.

These steps should not be compressed into a tight time pattern but should be extended over a period of time since learning to write fables requires both experience with that type of literature and the development of the intellectual discipline to stay within the form.

The fable which follows illustrates the first type of fable plot pattern. The characters are flat and impersonal, and no one regrets the fate of the lazy chicken. Like most simple fables, this composition by a fourth grade pupil is brief, involving a single incident, and the ending is expected and justifiable. The originality found in other types of writing is not often found in a fable because the form is restricting and the content is prescribed by the moral.

> Once there was a chicken who, even though chickens get up early, this chicken did not. She liked to sleep late in the morning. But her friends who got up early, got the best food. And one day the farmer who owned this chicken was discouraged with this chicken. "She never gets up early, or lays good eggs, or eats good food," said the farmer very discouraged. So the next Sunday that little chicken was on the farmer's plate.
> Moral: Laziness does not pay off.[13]

The second fable was also written by a fourth grade boy after a number of fables had been studied in class. Note that the young writer has developed a clear, concise plot and has concluded with a moral.

### THE WOODSMAN AND THE HAWK

> There was once a woodsman who lived alone in a little hut.
> One day he was out in front of his hut when all of a sudden he heard two things at once, a hawk screaming and gunfire. He looked around. All of a sudden he happened to hear some flapping of wings. He looked down. There beside him was a panting hawk. The hawk said breathlessly, "Please kind sir, could you help me; a couple of dogs and a hunter are chasing me. Do you have a place to hide me?" "Why of course I do. Go into the hut and eat as much meat from my dog's bowl as you want. But come out when I tell you." In a few minutes the hunter and his two dogs came by the hut. The hunter asked, "Have you seen a hawk in the sky or on the ground around here?" "No, I haven't." he said, but as the woodsman said these words he winked his eye and pointed towards the hut. Anyhow the hunter did not see these signs, and so went on. When the hunter was

out of sight the woodsman told the hawk to come out. The hawk went on its way without saying a word. The woodsman asked, "Why do you go without thanking me for what I have done?" The hawk turned around and said, "I saw what you did as you said those words." Adding to that he said, "The tongue can be as sly as the hand."[14]

Pupils can achieve a sense of plot in their own writing, often done without conscious effort on their part, after studying many selections from children's literature. The fourth grade writer of "Benny the Rabbit" has attempted to condense a whole series of episodes into a single story, which is much like *Charlotte's Web* by E. B. White. At one point the time sequence is inaccurate, but this does not detract and probably would have been corrected if the pupil's attention had been called to it. There is a note of sadness when we learn that Mr. Shoe sold Benny and that Benny hurt his paw, endured hunger, and later was killed. Even the chickens sense that Benny's delight in the sunshine and green grass foreshadows a dark ending. Like *Charlotte's Web*, however, at the end of the story the writer views the entire situation from the abstract adult world.

### BENNY THE RABBIT

Mr. Shoe had seven rabbits and wanted to sell one. So he found a girl who wanted him. The rabbits were playing leap-the-rabbit, which was the game they played all the time.

The next day Susy Ever came and got him. She took him home and showed her parents the rabbit. She named it Benny.

That afternoon her brother Russell built Benny his home. It was a cozy little place with a place to store carrots.

Tuesday Benny went out and said, "It's a beautiful morning."

The chicken replied, "Yes it is Benny."

Benny burst out saying, "O the grass is so green!"

"Yes it is," said the chicken.

Thursday Benny got his paw stuck in the door, but Susy fixed it up.

The next day Benny was boiling mad. Nobody came to feed him. One, two, three hours and still no food.

Saturday was Benny's birthday and he would be two years old. He got a carrot cake that was so good. He had a good time.

Friday Benny got away and when they found him a hunter had him and said that he was very poor and had one boy who needed gloves. Susy was very happy that they could use Benny to keep warm.[15]

### Teaching Point of View

A story may be told from more than a single point of view, depending on the narrator and the audience. Pupils should be helped to recognize

who is telling the story and the audience to whom the story is directed, both in literature and in their own written communication. Studying a story such as *The Bears on Hemlock Mountain* provides a way for helping pupils write about a single episode from more than one point of view. The story is about Jonathan, who crosses the mountain to get a large kettle for a christening. He tries to be brave and remembers that others have said, "There are no bears on Hemlock Mountain." But as dusk falls he discovers that there *are* bears on Hemlock Mountain and saves himself by upsetting the huge kettle and crawling under it; his father and uncles later find him.

Here are a few composition assignments using varying points of view which could be based on this story:

1. A newspaper account of Jonathan's experience. The news story should give the most important facts first, in this case the rescue, rather than appearing as a climax at the end of a story. The article would be written factually rather than imaginatively.

2. A letter written by Jonathan to Aunt Emma. To avoid frightening Aunt Emma, Jonathan would tell about his adventure with the bears but minimize the danger and seriousness of the situation.

3. A letter written by Jonathan to his Uncle James. Since Uncle James first mentioned the idea of bears on the mountain and is only six years older than Jonathan, he might want to impress him with his bravery and quick thinking and even exaggerate the facts in his letter.

4. A new chapter following the story. The story of the bear hunt by father and the uncles could be told in the third person and addressed to the same audience as the book.

5. Expository writing. An explanation of how food was prepared or a christening planned in pioneer times and how present-day plans differ would require the pupil to explain, compare, and contrast ideas. Pupils might feel the need to do research, since this type of writing requires a knowledge of facts.

6. Imaginative writing. Pupils could write an imaginative and creative account of another adventure that Jonathan might have. It could be modeled after the core story and use a basic plot motif:  leaving the secure home, going on an errand, meeting a monster, building suspense through real or imaginary danger, and finally returning home.

7. Descriptive writing. Pupils might wish to describe how Jonathan viewed the mountain in the bright sunshine during the morning or

how Jonathan felt when the bears were walking around the kettle while he was crowded inside.

### Evaluation of Composition

While the term *evaluation* has not been used to this point in the discussion of literature and composition, this is exactly what has been done with the examples of children's writing which have been included in this article. Attention has been called to the content—to the ideas which the pupils were developing—and to the structural forms commonly found in literature. Indeed, instilling a sensitivity to these elements is the teaching objective. Therefore, pupils are given a rich background of experience with literature and are led to see, hear, feel, and recognize elements and events in their environment which they might never otherwise notice.

There are many practical writing situations when teachers should call attention to spelling, punctuation, or usage. As pupils continue to write and to share their stories with their teachers and their peers, eventually they will discover the value of punctuation and capitalization as stoppers and starters. That point is the opportune moment for teaching the skills of handwriting, spelling, or punctuation.

Evaluation concerns much more than judging mechanical skill. Evaluation includes an identification of the ideas, thoughts, feelings, and adventures which the writer has presented. To share an involvement with the reader and to see appreciation for his story are compensation for the effort required of the writer. In other words, the evaluation can be the writer's reward.

Sometimes the effort of writing is great. Even a third grade pupil often feels overwhelmed by writing requirements. Yet at that very moment he can compose a description of his feelings for his teacher as noted in the following essay:

#### SOMETHING TO DO

Where is something to do? When I want something to do I can't, and when I don't want something to do there is something to do. I don't know why it is this way. Can anyone tell me? I am so weary.[16]

#### Notes

[1] Ruth G. Strickland, *The Language Arts in the Elementary School* (Second edition; Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1957), p. 152.

[2] Walter Loban, "Oral Language Proficiency Affects Reading and Writing," *The Instructor*, 75 (March 1966), 97ff.

[3] See, for example, Ruth G. Strickland, "The Language of Elementary School Children," *Bulletin of the School of Education*. 38,4 (July 1962). This journal is published in Bloomington by Indiana University.

[4] Teacher: Mrs. Eleanor Fuhrman, Grade 1, Norfolk, Nebraska.

[5] Teacher: Mrs. Virginia Hamilton, Grade 1, Lincoln, Nebraska.

[6] Sylvia Ashton-Warner, *Teacher* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963), pp. 79–80.

[7] James R. Squire, "Form Consciousness, an Important Variable in Teaching Language, Literature, and Composition," in Russell G. Stauffer (ed.), *Language and the Higher Thought Processes* (Champaign, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1965).

[8] See Rosenheim, p. 50 of this volume.

[9] Nebraska Curriculum Development Center, Paul Olson, Director, "Elementary Units," *A Curriculum for English* (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1966).

[10] Teacher: Miss Joline Beck, Grade 2, Lincoln, Nebraska.

[11] Teacher: Mrs. Alice Schnabel, Grade 1, Lincoln, Nebraska.

[12] May Hill Arbuthnot, *Children and Books* (Third edition; Chicago: Scott, Foresman, and Company, 1965), p. 304.

[13] Teacher: Mrs. Margaret Tatroe. Grade 4, Lincoln, Nebraska.

[14] Barbara Grothe, *Elementary Composition Evaluation Project* (Postdoctoral Study in Progress, The University of Nebraska).

[15] Teacher: Norma J. Cleary, Grade 4, Omaha, Nebraska.

[16] Eldonna L. Evertts, *A Longitudinal Study of the Syntax and Content of Children's Compositions* (Grades 2-6), (Postdoctoral Study in Progress, The University of Nebraska).