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USES OF GRAMMAR

SARAH D'ELOIA

THE USES—AND LIMITS—OF GRAMMAR

INTRODUCTION

One of the more dispiriting discoveries of the Basic Writing teacher is that the study of grammar has been shown to have rather negligible effects upon student writing. The results with traditional grammar are uniformly discouraging, and the somewhat better results with structural and transformational grammars seem to depend less on any superiority in the grammatical analysis than on the fact that these grammars encourage students to manipulate the language as well as analyze it. Wherever it has been seriously researched, the analytical study of grammar has failed to produce significant results in student writing across the board—whether the result sought was improvement in the control of errors, increased sentence length, or increased variety of sentence structure; whether the students were in junior high school, high school, or college; whether they came from privileged or underprivileged backgrounds; whether the grammar studied was traditional, structural, or transformational generative. If there is one conclusion to be drawn which cuts across all the studies, it is this: the more time spent analyzing grammar as grammar, the less time spent writing; the less time spent writing, the less the improvement in the written product.

These hard facts cause many Basic Writing instructors to abandon the attempt to teach any grammar systematically. They hope, by emphasizing for the student the development of his unique voice and a number of strategies for finding and organizing better content, to foster simultaneously an improved self image, a confidence and pride in the act of writing, a desire to make it perfect on every level. They hope to avoid a psychologically debilitating, boring, and futile preoccupation with grammar and error, in the belief that the student can get it right readily enough when he genuinely has the motivation to do so and in the belief that repeated exposure to the written standard will enable the student to acquire standard forms by osmosis, much as his instructor acquired them.

These same hard facts leave other instructors with lingering doubts and suspicions. They are persuaded they became more astute observers

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of the language and better writers partly as a result of rigorous grammatical study, sometimes of English, sometimes of a foreign language. Resisting, in disbelief, the clear enough results of dozens of studies, they suspect that something was radically wrong with the research design or the instruction in grammar itself. They suspect, for example, that it takes longer than a single quarter, semester or even year for the study of grammar to manifest itself in improved fluency or correctness. They suspect that the study of grammar was boring: too deductive, facts-oriented, and passive, rather than inductive, actively analytical, stimulating, and discovery-laden. They suspect that the study of grammar was divorced from rather than thoroughly integrated into the process of writing, and perhaps intentionally, as a test of automatic rather than carefully mediated transference. They cannot bring themselves to believe that units combining the analysis of a grammatical principle with well-structured proofreading, imitation, paraphrase, and sentence consolidation exercises, and with directed writing assignments could fail to produce more significant results in both fluency and error control.

They suspect, in addition, that the research design did not take into account, nor teach across, first, the difference between the mental operations activated by reading for meaning, where one blocks out the interference of errors and miscues, and proofreading, in which one blocks out all but that meaning necessary to parse for errors and miscues, nor secondly, the difference between the parsing skills necessary for handbook exercises and the additional skill of psychological distancing necessary for proofing one's own work. Worst of all, they distrust the efficacy of linguistic osmosis, seeing the student's non-standard forms as a semi-permeable membrane across which new concepts and meanings—but not new linguistic patterns—will move with ease; they suspect that there are some errors, perhaps many, over which the student will have neither proofreading nor productive control until he has an analytical and conceptual control of the grammar of the standard dialect.

CATEGORIES OF GRAMMAR BASED ERRORS

The grammatical errors of beginning adult writers that one might hope to address through grammar are legion. They fall into several broad groups.

There are the inflectional omissions, redundancies, and leveling errors of the nouns, verbs, pronouns, adjectives and adverbs, involving

plurality, possession, agreement, tense, case and degree which arise from different phonological and grammatical rules in the student's home dialect. (Omission: *two boy, John coat;* redundancy: *more better;* extension: *hisself, theirself(ves)*—like *myself, yourself, herself, ourselves;* I *seen* him do it—shared preterite and perfective form, as in *taught, bought, caught, slept, kept.*)

There are other less common forms derived from the more familiar spoken language which involve not so much the inflections of words but the choice, form, order, even the omission of words. These errors include the omitted ("zero") present tense copula; the omission of any contractable first auxiliary as in *he go* for *he will/would go;* the use of *-en* for *-ing* on participles where pronunciations are similar, as in *He is eaten his dinner;* durative *be; ain't* as a negative auxiliary before the unmarked (*go*), progressive (*going*), and perfective verb forms (variously *went* or *gone*); *done* or *been* as the perfective auxiliary; the reduced purposive future (I'm *gonna/gon/on/a/* put the cat out); the reduced conditional perfect (I(woul)d *of/a* done it myself); multiple negatives (John could*n't* do *nothing* for her. Could*n't nobody* do *nothing* for her. *Ain't nobody* can(*'t*) do *nothing* for her.); and the indirect question (I asked him whose turn *was it.* I asked him *is it* his turn.)

There are the hypercorrect forms like *can walks, could walked, to finished, to be abled, he walk's,* forms which do not belong in either dialect, but which result from the student's attempt to produce standard inflections. In the absence of a pronunciation clue in his own dialect and in the absence of an abstract grasp of standard inflections, he must simply guess where *-s-'s,-s'* and *-ed* go.

On the one hand, there are the words lacking derivational affixes, like *courage* for *courageous* or *astonish* for *astonishment,* which bespeak the student's lack of familiarity with the system of derivational affixes that turn nouns to adjectives, verbs to nouns, and so on. In contrast, there are the coined words, many of them marvelously inventive, such as *enbodyness* for *embodiment,* which bespeak the student's attempt to manipulate a system he partially understands and the linguistic fact that the forms of many words are arbitrary. Here the student senses that he has heard the word he needs or that such a word ought to exist: he lacks familiarity with the specific word he needs.

There are the syntactically tangled sentences which result from the student's attempt to extend his syntactic control over longer stretches of related ideas, in order to show within a single sentence the complex patterns of logical and grammatical subordination, differential relation, and equivalence. Tangles increase with abstract topics because the student must perceive, consolidate, and clarify the complex relations

between the observable facts and his conclusions. Thus the more perceptive and far-reaching a student's insights, the more difficulty he will have parcelling them out into sentences that properly order and relate them; the more inexperienced the student is as a writer, the less he will know how to start and, if off on the wrong foot, how to start over again. These syntactically tangled sentences may be classified according to the structures involved in the production of the tangle.[1]

In some cases, the student's problem seems to be a lack of familiarity with a particular structure, for example, the inverted subject verb and divided *but . . . also* of the co-ordinated clauses beginning *"Not only . . ."*. In other cases, it seems clear enough that the student can produce well-formed subordinate clauses of cause, condition, concession, and so on most of the time, but that he may mismanage them when he is trying to handle a number of subordinations simultaneously, with the result that his sentence contains peculiar redundancies and lapses. In some cases, it appears that the student has access to a multiplicity of options for expressing his idea, but that having settled on an option as he begins, he is unable to keep other options from impinging as he continues. In other cases one suspects that the student is limited to specific options for handling various parts of his sentence, and that these options do not mesh with each other and cannot be made to, without resort to a total recasting which exploits an option to which he has no productive, though perhaps passive, access.

Last of all there are the fragments, run-ons, and comma splices. These are of course errors of punctuation rather than grammar, yet they arise because the student cannot co-ordinate conventional punctuation with anything more specific than length in number of words or pauses in speech or his sense that some parts of what he has written "are related" or "refer to each other" or "belong together" in some way. Thus a student may punctuate a long introductory prepositional phrase with a period because he pauses there and because "it's so long it has to be a sentence," or he may punctuate sentences like "The movie star Bruce Lee was a remarkable person, he didn't let his success go to his head" with a comma, and explain that the comma is used because *he* "refers back to"

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[1]See Mina Shaughnessy's *Errors and Expectations*, Chapter 3, "Syntax," for an illuminating discrimination between Accidental Errors (inadvertant word omissions or misspellings which miscue the reader), Blurred Patterns (a syntactically dissonant mixture of two or more patterns, as in "By going to college a young person could *get an increase his knowledge* about the world he lived in."), Consolidation Errors involving subordination, coordination, and juxtaposition, and Inversions (errors resulting from imperfect control of all departures from the most normal word order whether in simple sentences, relative clause structures, extraposed noun clauses, or unusual sentence patterns such as *the more, the merrier*).

Bruce Lee. Compare *who*). These errors arise because the student is unable to establish sentence boundaries by distinguishing independent clauses from all the other structures which can attach to them and which often closely resemble them.

The question is, which of these problems will yield to the study of grammar? And how much grammar should a student be taught? How much does he need to know? Traditional, structural, transformational generative? What, in short, are the uses—and limits—of grammar?

USES OF GRAMMAR FOR TEACHERS

There are a number of benefits that can accrue to the instructor who has immersed himself in such works as Otto Jesperson's *Philosophy of Grammar* and *Essentials of English Grammar* or Labov's *Language in the Inner City* or a bone crunching graduate course in transformational generative grammar or, better yet, comparative approaches to English grammar. These activities, apart from the hard information they impart, suggest alternative ways of viewing the world of language, and have the salutory effect of making one aware that very different kinds of rules are possible and valid, that there are constraints on the operation of "rules" which appear to defy explanation—aware of something he may have forgotten: what it feels like to be a student awash in a subject he does not comprehend. So important is it for the instructor to keep before himself a feeling for what it is not to know, a model of how it is he himself learns, and how the process of coming into knowledge works, that my gutsy high school geometry teacher spent some of her summers taking advanced graduate courses out of her field, without the proper prerequisites. Otherwise, she forgot, she said, why it was her students could not understand what was obvious to her; otherwise she could not teach. Otherwise she could only be impatient with our perverse stupidity. If, however, she had been recently confused herself, she could spot the likely sources of our confusion, though in subject matter intimately familiar to her, and move us past our confusions in a sensible order.

No capacity will better serve the Basic Writing teacher than this capacity to probe for the student's perspective on a particular problem. This capacity to imagine and project oneself into solutions, alternatives, world views other than one's own is, after all, just what we are asking of the student, in our classes and in the liberal arts curriculum. We can strengthen our pedagogy by consciously exercising it ourselves. By doing so, we discover more exactly the kinds of knowledge that separate

us from the student. It is not enough to know that he is wrong, but that he is wrong for a reason.

There are a number of ways the Basic Writing instructor can serve the student better by having grammatical expertise. If he reads the available literature on non-standard dialects and second language interference patterns, he will more readily see the sources of many of his student's errors, and what before seemed chaotic or careless mistakes will have explanations and often prove to have rules of their own.

If the instructor is familiar with several schools of grammar, he will be better able to practice an informed eclecticism, picking and choosing from a variety of explanations, possible presentations, and "discovery procedures" those that are most likely to shed light for the student on his error, to tell him exactly what to do exactly where in order to be correct, to give him a "mechanical" way both to produce correct forms and to proofread for correctness. Grammatical expertise will give him a sense for the times when he can simply explain a principle and for the other times when the principle to be explained is sufficiently complicated that it is better, though much more time-consuming, to lead the student inductively to a grasp of the principle, with the student drawing the increasingly complex generalizations from increasingly complex facts of standard grammar. It will give him a better perception of what it is the student has to "discover" and how this "discovery" can be "arranged."

Grammatical expertise will help him improve his exercises in a variety of other ways. He will improve his intuitions about the natural sequences in his instruction and have a means of thinking about areas of uncertainty. It will help him decide how to pull together all the forms which the student finds distractingly similar or distressingly contradictory, such as the base word ending with *-s*, the noun plural *-s*, the verb singular *-s*, the contraction *'s*, and the possessives (*-'s*, *-s'*),[2] and how to begin with unrealistically simplified material, in order to establish the principle, and then add increasingly complicating distractors, as in teaching the recognition of sentence boundaries. It will help him reason in advance about which distractors are likely to be most distracting for his students, or if he simply stumbles across an extremely discriminating test item, he will be able to understand and generalize the principle he has hit upon. In either case, he can better focus practice and measures of mastery in the areas where confusions or perceptual blocks are greatest. It will help him know why certain errors prove most recalcitrant, long after the student masters the principle, and it will suggest

[2]See Patricia Lawrence, "Error's Endless Train," *Journal of Basic Writing*, I (Spring 1975), pp. 35-37, for a set of graduated perceptual exercises in recognizing the inflection -s.

ways to use language forms and competencies the student already has in order to elicit and foster those he does not.

Grammatical expertise will replace the teacher's tendency to mark errors and supply the correct forms with a tendency to think in terms of interrelated systems which comprehend and address the sources of student error. It will give him the tools to address all of the kinds of error enumerated above. Indeed, the more standard and non-standard grammar the teacher knows, the more he may economize in his instruction to the student, out of knowing what is relevant and for what purposes.

None of the benefits I have mentioned accrue inevitably to the person who studies grammars. Pedants can become more pedantic. But the person who is familiar with some of the methods and results of linguistic analysis is likely to improve his grasp of various productive techniques of grammatical study, and to see that different grammars can be put to productive use in a variety of ways.

USES OF GRAMMAR FOR STUDENTS

Orientation toward error. Given our course objectives, that a student learn to write, and to write more fluently and more cogently, as well as more correctly, it follows that all grammatical study should be subordinated to the elimination of error, so that grammatical study will take away as little time as possible from actual practice writing. I would argue that the rigorous study of the grammatical subtleties of the language will, like the rigorous study of algebra, calculus, chemistry, Shakespeare, and symbolic logic, sharpen the critical faculties and "improve" the mind. The most significant question is, however, not whether students would profit in some general abstract way from rigorous grammatical study or whether this sort of study would not, in time, lead to a more sensitive and more correct use of the standard language, but whether, given the two or three semesters the student has in which to prove he can pass muster, it is the most gainful use he can make of his time, given his urgent need to write better and in the standard dialect. While it is necessary to address ourselves directly to the grammatical difficulties that make our student population different from "traditional" students, it would be folly to ignore the avalanche of studies that point to minimal connection between the ability to parse, label, diagram, and correct exercises and a more generalized correctness, fluency and elegance in writing.

From this general principle, two more follow. First, grammatical

instruction should proceed with a minimum of terminology and the simplest terminology possible. In practice, this seems to mean using the traditional terms which many of our students have heard and to which they are attached, but supplementing them with the visible forms which we want our students to produce. Where our students have not learned a label—"gerund" is a case in point for most—"the *-ing* form in a noun position" will do. Whole sets of constructions can be handled in this manner. Exercises practicing transformational paraphrases can describe the paraphrases to be produced as the *-'s-ing* paraphrase, the *-'s -xxx* (special ending) paraphrase, the *for . . . to . . .* paraphrase, and the *it . . . that* paraphrase, for example, in an exercise of this sort:

Convert the underlined *the fact that* clause to the following paraphrases as in the example below:

The fact that his best student failed the exam surprised Prof. Helton.

's-ing
His best student's failing the exam surprised Prof. Helton.

-'s -xxx
His best student's failure of the exam surprised Prof. Helton.

for . . . to . . .
For his best student to fail the exam surprised Prof. Helton.

It . . . that . . .
It surprised Prof. Helton that his best student failed the exam.

One need not refer to "gerund phrases," "infinitive phrases," "extraposition" and the like, for these terms simply divert attention from the operations to be accomplished and from the visible forms by which they are accomplished. Nothing is to be gained, when the objective is error reduction, by covering the grammatical ground, in order to round out the grammar, unless the constructions being discussed are not readily accessible to the student or are a source of error, and in a way clear to the instructor.

Second, at the same time that the instructor is attempting to minimize the time devoted to grammar, he must be careful to teach whatever makes standard English predictable for the student—not only what is necessary, but also, *all* that is necessary. Otherwise his instruction in grammar falls short of its objective, the elimination of error. The standard dialect remains intractable and unruly for our students until they can impose the right rules. The student who is told that all verb phrases are marked for present or past tense is likely to produce forms

like *can walks* and *could walked,* unless he is also led to see that a first auxiliary, if present, bears the only tense marking, and that other endings have other sources.

Integration of grammar study and writing. The instructor should integrate the study of a grammatical concept into the process of writing as thoroughly as he can contrive the mix, so that the student transfers an abstract grasp of grammatical principles to correct production, and so that he addresses matters of fluency, maturity, cogency, and correctness simultaneously. Integrating grammatical study and actual writing is not so difficult a task as may first appear, once one has this in mind as an important objective and once one has a repertoire of techniques at his disposal. The two may be integrated in a variety of ways, but the objective is always to integrate the actual production of forms with an understanding of the forms to be produced and with actual proofreading for those forms. Four strategies are discussed below.

1. Dictation. One highly productive way to integrate production and proofreading is old-fashioned dictation. The instructor can write and dictate short passages heavily laden with troublesome forms, let us say present and past perfectives of regular verbs ending in consonant clusters, where the student is least likely to pronounce or hear the terminal *-ed.* The practice is most beneficial if it follows by one class hour the study of the construction of the tenses at hand but if the structural point of the dictation is at first unremarked. The student, having taken down the passage, is then told the "real" content, and told to go back and supply and circle every *-ed* he missed. This dictation can be followed by another immediately, of like kind. The point is to make the student aware of his aural perceptual block and aware of the fact that he has the analytical skill to overcome it, by matching up *have's* with perfective endings, and to give him chances to practice overcoming his perceptual resistance to the correct form, at the point where that resistance is highest, by applying his analytical knowledge of the construction of these phrases.

2. Grammatical follow-ups to writing assignments. The sort of practice in simultaneous production and proofreading that occurs in dictation can be supplemented by another in which production and proofreading are more discrete. The student may be instructed to write an essay using one of several topic sentences establishing a present perfect frame ("My parents have (not) had a lot of influence on my beliefs and values," "The person who has had the most influence on my present beliefs and values is . . ." "I have had to reject (come to accept) a lot of the things I was taught by my family."). He is also instructed, as a part of his

proofreading, to sunburst ⟨⟩ every use of *have, has,* or *had* as a simple, one-word verb, and to box every *have* which appears as an auxiliary, and to box the past participle form of the verb that occurs with it, making sure he has used the past participle form. This sort of grammatical follow up to the writing assignment forces the student to reread his paper, and to proofread it for one kind of error. It encourages him to transfer the skills he uses to correct workbook exercises to his own writing and to develop the psychological distance toward his own work that proofreading, and more importantly, rewriting, require.

Other grammatically oriented follow-ups appropriate to other grammatical lessons would include such exercises as using a slash to divide every complete subject from every complete verb in every sentence; circling every dependent clause marker, to be sure every dependent clause is punctuated to tie it to its main clause; underlining every tense marked verb and verb phrase in the paper; and underlining every present tense verb and its subject, having first had the student write an essay using a topic sentence which established a third person singular topic (and potential subject for the sentences) and a clearly present time frame ("My father always encourages me to. . . ." "Aunt Emma is always telling me. . . .").

3. Paraphrases and conversions. Yet another way to integrate writing and grammatical practice is to construct grammatical exercises so that they require considerable rewriting and recasting rather than simply picking the correct option or marking the error and supplying the correct form. While the latter kinds of exercises are useful for determining quickly whether the student has mastered the principle involved, they do not reveal the extent to which the student has moved from a conceptual grasp of the principle to an internalized operational knowledge of the principle, that is, to the ability to produce the correct forms under the stresses and distractions of writing. Nor do they give the student the opportunity to internalize the operation of the principle by practicing the production of the correct forms in the context of a modified form of actual composition.

Exercises of this sort may require the student to convert sentences or entire passages from *of-plus-noun* prepositional phrases to possessives thereof, and vice versa; from the third person singular to the plural, and vice versa, picking up pronoun and subject verb agreement; from the present to the past, and vice versa; from the active voice to the passive and vice versa; from sets of simple sentences to "combined" sentences, and vice versa; from full noun clauses to phrasal equivalents and vice versa; from direct discourse, especially questions, to indirect discourse and vice versa; and so on. There is a natural sequence to many of these exercises,

later exercises assuming previous exposure to some grammatical fact. The student who had trouble with simple noun and pronoun possessives will have an opportunity for review in sentence combining or imitation exercises requiring nominalized structures, including the *-'s -ing*, *-'s -xxx* (special ending) paraphrases mentioned above, as for example, in sentence combining exercises of this sort:

Combine the two sentences below, using *is -ing* and *-'s -xxx* to convert the second sentence to a phrase replacing SOMETHING, as in the example:

I was worried about SOMETHING.
My parents had disappeared mysteriously.

-s -ing

I was worried about my parents' disappearing mysteriously.

-s -xxx

I was worried about my parents' mysterious disappearance.

4. Imitation. Still another way to integrate writing and grammatical practice is through imitation exercises of various sorts. In one kind of close imitation, emphasizing function words and word endings, the student matches one sentence with another of his own, by filling in the blanks appropriately. It is sometimes helpful to suggest the topic of the new sentence, especially in the early exercises (see B below), lest students inadvertently pick a topic, like the abstract word *aspect,* that makes parallelism difficult. Thus:

Match these sentences with three of your own:

A. I *was* worried *about* my parents' disappear*ing* mysteriously.

1. _____ was _____ ed about _____ _____s'
   _____ing _____ ly.
2. _____ was _____ ed about _____ _____ s'
   _____ ing _____ ly.
3. _____ was _____ ed about _____ _____ s'
   _____ing _____ ly.

Now write a sentence of your own, making it structurally identical to the three you have already produced.

1. _____

_____

B. *The* gent*ly* fall*ing* snow sift*ed through the* denud*ed* branch*es of the* tree.

1. The _____ ly _____ ing man _____ ed through the _____ ed _____ (e)s of the _____ .
2. The _____ ly _____ ing snob _____ ed through the _____ ed _____ (e)s of the _____ .
3. The _____ ly _____ ing face _____ ed through the _____ ed _____ (e)s of the _____ .

Now write two sentences of your own, making them structurally identical to the three you have already produced.

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

Sentences with multiple "levels" or "layers" of co-ordination and modification impose their own semantic constraints, and with this sort of sentence it is best to use a much looser kind of imitation which emphasizes these larger structural relations, and to preface "pure" imitation with practice combining short sentences where these larger relations have been worked out. Sentence combining has already been shown to increase the maturity of student sentences as measured in T-units (essentially all main clauses with all their modifiers, even if mis-punctuated as fragments).[3] Combining "canned" sentences appears to be less effective than combining student-generated sentences, at least with some remedial students.[4] Preliminary investigation suggests that

[3]See John C. Mellon's *Transformational Sentence Combining*, Research Report No. 6 (Champaign, Ill: NCTE, 1966) and Frank O'Hare's *Sentence Combining*, Research Report No. 15 (Champaign, Ill.: NCTE, 1971).

[4]Studies of sentence combining with remedial students include James Wesley Howell's "A Comparison of Achievement of Students in Remedial English Using a Linguistic and a Traditional Approach" (Diss. New York Univ., 1973), Andrea Lunsford's "An Historical, Descriptive, and Evaluative Study of Remedial English in American Colleges and Universities" (Diss. Ohio State Univ., 1974), and Leslie Freede's, "The Impact of Sentence Combining on the Syntactic Maturity of College Students at the Remedial Level (Master's Thesis, City College, 1976).

imitation exercises have a greater effect than sentence combining.[5]

It seems likely that a combination of sentence combining and sentence imitation will prove as or more effective than either strategy alone. Neither sentence combining nor sentence imitation is exactly comparable to the process of composing, where the writer simultaneously generates ideas and wrestles with the various structural options for setting them forth. But sentence combining allows a student to practice using an option he underexploits in a context that is right, by supplying ready-made content, and sentence imitation encourages him to generate both the structure he underexploits as well as a semantically appropriate context for it. Of the two, imitation is the more difficult and the more similar to actual composition, unlike it in imposing sharp restrictions on both content and form that are absent in ordinary spontaneous composition. But these restrictions may channel thought productively, actually suggesting lines of development as well as limiting them.

An exercise combining the techniques of sentence generation, sentence combining and imitation generally needs four components of incremental difficulty: (1) an example showing shorter separate sentences and how they might be combined according to a specific structural pattern, (2) a structurally parallel group of sentences which the student is to combine using the specified pattern, (3) an incomplete group of sentences with the most difficult parts of the content and the structurally crucial elements given, which the student is to complete and then combine according to the same pattern, (4) space for the student to work out his own sentences and his own combination of them, with the structurally crucial elements given. If the student is likely to become stalled because he cannot find appropriate content, the instructor may want to give the sentence(s) or suggest topics suitable to parallel development. These four stages are isolated at steps A through D in two sample exercises given at Appendix A. The first exercise results in single descriptive sentences of some complexity, the second in expository paragraphs of four sentences. As a finale for the second exercise, the student is given strategies for doubling the length—and substance—of these paragraphs, and opportunity to practice these strategies.

These sorts of exercises are turned to best use when they move from narrative and descriptive passages to the exposition we want our students to learn to produce. Then they can be used to teach the student to develop and order kinds of content such as different examples,

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[5]Rosemary Hake (Chicago State) and Joseph Williams (University of Chicago) have noted these results in carefully matched sentence combining and imitation exercises.

different reasons for coming to the same conclusion, different results and their place in the cause-effect chain. We can also use them to teach the student to recognize and exploit the semantic equivalence and syntactic differences of the words and phrases that specify the relationships between clauses such as *but, however,* and *although,* and *as a result, with the result that* and *so that* in the second sample exercise.

A final word about imitation exercises. They can and should be turned to rhetorical questions. The necessity of imitating may lead a student to omit ideas or to raise his points in an infelicitous order. Students may discuss, for example, whether the three reasons given for opposing gun control in Exercise 2 in the Appendix are raised in the most effective order, moving as they do from large matters of political wisdom in governance to matters of private inconvenience or private sacrifice. Are there different effective orders? One for arguing the case, another for rebutting it? Imitation exercises may well conclude with the suggestion that the student start over with the same topic from scratch, free of the restrictions that imitation imposed on the development of his ideas.

The discovery approach. I have argued that it is most productive for Basic Writing students if their instructors teach only that grammar necessary for the student to address error, and even *that* grammar as economically and as thoroughly integrated into the process of writing as possible.

I would argue further that what turns out to be economical in the long run is often time-consuming over the short haul. The paradoxical economy of the longer explanation arises for two reasons. First, some phenomena, such as the construction of verb phrases, are so complex that nothing other than a long drawn out analysis makes the total system comprehensible. Second, almost any grammatical point is more interesting to the student when he himself discovers the "rule" or "convention" from examples of its operation, instead of the more customary handbook method of stating the rule and giving examples. For any point of instruction, the instructor must weigh the complexity of the point and gains in student interest against the inevitable expenditure of extra time lost to other purposes.

The inductive or discovery approach has three further advantages. The student tends to remember the conclusion he has drawn himself better than one he has been given, and if his memory begins to slip, he has access to a method for recovering the rule. In addition, the approach fosters an exploratory, open classroom tone which encourages the student to interact with, challenge, and one-up his classmates in a spirit of friendly competitiveness and mutual inquiry. Finally, it respects the

student's intelligence, treating the student as the teacher's equal, not in acquired knowledge, certainly, but in insight and perceptiveness.

1. Sharp focus on significant differences. The success of the discovery method depends upon the instructor's skill with two strategies. The first of these is the strategy of pulling together, into one place, all the structures the student finds confusing. Sometimes these structures are closely related in meaning but significantly different in form, as with the phrase and dependent clause variants of an independent clause; sometimes the structures are essentially unrelated, but superficially similar, as in the case of the *-s*'s ending words. In either case, the student experiences the structures as an imperfectly discriminated, only partially articulated whole. Thus, the instructor should operate out of a strictly conceived contrastive approach, which excludes, at first, all of the distracting variables which are the actuality of real language use but off the structural point at hand. By the term "strictly conceived contrastive approach," I do not mean the method of foreign language teaching based upon "contrastive analysis" of the structures of the native language and the foreign language, though I do not recommend against this approach for students with many deeply-seated native language or dialect differences for whom relatively few standard inflections come easily, even in conferences, and for whom the overt translation may be productive. What I have in mind is the simultaneous presentation of the structural variants for essentially identical kinds of logical relation or semantic content in the target dialect. This strategy not only emphasizes the resourcefulness and variety of the language; it forces the student to focus on those function words and inflectional endings by which structural differences are signalled—precisely those words and endings which escape or bedevil him in proofreading.

For example, in introducing the sentence, it has proven illuminating and economical to give the student lists of semantically related structures like these, asking him to identify the *one* complete sentence in each group by giving it a capital and period:

for the child to sing sweetly
the child's sweet song
the sweetly singing child
the child singing sweetly
the child is singing sweetly
that the child is singing sweetly
if the child is singing sweetly
whenever the child is singing sweetly

for the woman to smile knowingly
the woman's knowing smile
the knowingly smiling woman
the woman smiling knowingly
the woman was smiling knowingly
that the woman was smiling knowingly
because the woman was smiling knowingly
so that the woman was smiling knowingly

for the bomb to explode suddenly
the bomb's sudden explosion
the suddenly exploding bomb
the bomb exploding suddenly
the bomb exploded suddenly
that the bomb exploded suddenly
when the bomb exploded suddenly
unless the bomb exploded suddenly

for the student to be genuinely astonished
the student's genuine astonishment
the genuinely astonished student
the student being genuinely astonished
the student was genuinely astonished
that the student was genuinely astonished
since the student was genuinely astonished
although the student was genuinely astonished

The students are then asked to try to define a sentence—not as a complete idea—but in terms of its structural parts: what it must have and what it must lack. The instructor leads the class at the board in identifying all the things that change from line to line with circles, underlining the things that do not change; for example, in the first group, *the, child, sing, sweet* would be underlined, and *for, to, -ly, -ing, is, that, if, whenever* circled. When the instructor reaches the addition of the word *is,* he makes the point that this word marks the noun verb relationship for time, as one can tell by substituting another time-marked word, *was.* None of the earlier word groups were marked for time. The time of the action expressed by these verbs will vary according to the time expressed in the verbs that must be added to turn these word groups into sentences: "The child's sweet song *is bringing/ brought/ will bring* tears to my eyes." As the instructor moves through the dependent clauses, he leads students to note that they are identical to the complete sentence, except that they contain an extra word which marks the clause

as a part of some other sentence. The students are led to the conclusion that a sentence must have a subject and a tense-marked verb and must lack a dependent clause marker. The teacher should work through one or two sets of sentences on the board, then have the students do the circles and underlinings for another one or two independently at their desks.

At the next stage, the instructor has the class give the non-sentence equivalents of *Flight 110 is arriving promptly; The infant whimpered weakly, Gus laughs easily* and *My mother was truly pleased;* the first one or two as board work, the last independently. Students then use the same system of circling the variables and underlining the constants, to be sure they got their versions right.

Last of all the students look at three structures which are ambiguous grammatically: they can be sentences or not, depending on context: *which woman was smiling knowingly* (as direct question or noun clause), *the student genuinely astonished* (as nominative absolute, as noun with non-restrictive participle, as direct object noun with direct object participial complement, as sentence with an omitted, context-clear object) and *the child's singing sweetly* (as gerund phrase paraphrasable as *the child's sweet singing* and as a sentence with a contracted *is*). Obviously the students do not struggle with labels; they simply produce sentence and non-sentence examples, by adding words, paraphrasing, changing intonation, and supplying the situational context to illustrate their insights. From this point the class can move in one of several directions—for example, to a discussion of the different kinds of *-s,* all of which they have had to use in these paraphrases, or to sentence expansion and contraction exercises.

2. *Incrementation.* The second strategy necessary for a successful discovery process, especially for the weaker students, is a very careful and purposeful incrementation, moving from the state of extremely simplified contrasts of bare-bones structures through the stages by which increasingly complex variables and distracting items are added, in the order which will prove most helpful to the students. For instance, familiar words are easier than unfamiliar words, short words are easier than long ones, verbs which require no derivational ending when converted to noun function *(smile)* are easier than those that do *(astonishment),* active voice verbs are easier than passives, common derivational patterns *(astonish/astonishment)* are easier than less common ones *(demean, demeanor),* unambiguous structures are easier than ambiguous ones. The purpose of incrementation is to avoid overwhelming the less confident or weaker student with more information than he can process simultaneously. Like the llama bearing

only one stick too many, the student may be unable to rise. In the exercise just above, for example, it may be a good idea to eliminate the adjective to adverb conversion (*sweet, sweetly)* for some or all of the groups of sentences, depending upon the entry level of the students and the rate at which they are mastering the phrase and dependent clause variants of the simple sentence. Similarly, the common adjective to adverb conversion should be practiced before flat adverbs like *early* and *fast*, or irregular conversions like *good/well*, or converted prepositional phrases (*arriving at noon/noon arrival*); and intransitive complete verbs before intransitive linking verbs and transitive verbs taking direct objects. In sentences with both indirect and direct objects, or direct objects and direct object complements, some of the phrase variants are so clumsy that a few examples serve as an admonishment to avoid them, and students should be encouraged to develop ugliness scales for such structures as *my giving Mary a little help* and *my gift to Mary of a little help*, and *the gift to Mary from me of a little help*.

Finally, at the same time the instructor laboriously learns how, like a slow-motion instant-replay camera, to delay and replay the flow of language events, he must also be able to fast-forward through them as rapidly as progress admits, even to drop all his painstakingly developed exercises as soon as it becomes apparent the exercises address problems the students do not or no longer have.

THE LIMITS OF GRAMMARS

Every grammatical approach is limited. Each has a bias growing out of some central assumption, some central problem to be solved, some central question to be answered. Each has, as a result, strengths of a certain kind and weaknesses of other kinds. Traditional grammar, with its emphasis on words and meanings and its assumption that Latin was the model, tends to be prescriptive, even inaccurate, and often about matters of little moment, has little to say useful on word order, and gives a static rather than dynamic view of language. But much is of value: the labels for parts of speech and their functions, and much of the semantic subcategorization of the parts of speech, such as the subclassification of nouns as concrete or abstract, count or mass, common or proper, has been incorporated into subsequent grammars. Structural grammar, with its emphasis on the linearity of language and on discovery procedures that would reveal the internal structures of that linear sequence, has much more to say that is useful about the discovery process, about defining the parts of speech by function word signals, inflections and derivational affixes rather than meaning, and about the

order of syntactic elements. But it has relatively little to say about the kinds of relations that undergird, cut across, or transcend word order. Transformational generative grammar, with its emphasis on these transformational relations between structures and its disputes about what should be regarded as transforms, has much to say of use about these relations and suggests many useful strategies such as sentence combining and transformational paraphrasing, but in a language of symbols and diagrams so foreign and technical that it remains inaccessible to most.

There appear to be, regrettably, limits upon every attempt to deal with the full range of possibilities in the language in a simple way. The extremely elegant transformation rule for verb phrase structure which I take up below does not tidily account for the way *ought to* lacks a present equivalent (*owe* is obsolete), or the way *must go* is the present equivalent of *had to go*, nor the behavior of other modal like structures. Fortunately, these structures are not the source of written errors for many students. Similarly, the x-word grammar strategy of having students turn declarative sentences to questions, is extremely useful in teaching subject-verb agreement, tense-marking, subject location and in overcoming the sentence fragment. Instructors will be delighted to discover that the question technique will locate the subject of "There's the book you wanted me to read" by normalizing the order: 'Is the book you wanted me to read there?" Many will be dismayed to find the word *there* identified as the subject in sentences like "There are things I can do to help" when the sentence is converted: "Are there things I can do to help?" This same strategy will help students who write frequent fragments find most of them: long introductory phrases, subjects divided from verbs, verbs separated from subjects, and adverb clauses simply will not convert. Neither will a few other structures which are, nonetheless, complete sentences. Sentences with subject infinitives such as "For Nixon to deny involvement angered the public" do not convert as "Did for Nixon to deny involvement anger the public?" but as "Did it anger the public for Nixon to deny involvement?" and sentences with comparisons on the pattern of *the more, the merrier*, such as "The less the student writes, the less he improves" do not convert gracefully to "Is the less the student writes, the less he improves?" Something like "Is it true that the less the student writes, the less he improves?" is the grammatical paraphrase. Furthermore, some fragments can be converted to questions: The author's intent can escape the strategic net if the author intends a single sentence in such constructions as "I didn't know. Which waitress would come to my table" and "I hadn't realized. That was the book. She wanted me to read." Every system has the painful

exceptions that require elaboration of the "simple" rule.

Beyond the conceptual limitations of any given grammar, and the limitations imposed by the complexity of language itself, there is the fact that no grammar that is taught to Basic Writing students as it would be taught to upperclassmen or graduate students, that is, largely divorced from practice in perception, intensive writing, and enforced proofreading, will have a significant effect on the writing of these students. As suggested earlier, the better results obtained with structural and generative grammars as theoretical bases seem to depend upon the fact that they suggested exercises which involved actually operating the language rather than merely dissecting it. A further limit upon the effectiveness of grammatical instruction is the human limitation of the instructor: limited time, limited information, and limited imagination in addressing the problems of perception, production, and proofreading. We can do a great deal to overcome the weaknesses of individual grammars, to expand our knowledge, and to stimulate our imaginations by reading widely and by consciously mediating between grammatical analysis and the synthesis of writing. For the chief limit of grammar is that grammatical analysis has no necessary connection to the synthetic process of writing. Perception is not production. Production is not proofreading. By whatever system the instruction is done, diagraming and parsing are about as similar to writing as admiring the dance and executing it, watching pro ball and playing it. We minimize our effectiveness anytime we lose sight of this first principle.

A SYLLABUS FOR TEACHING THE VERB PHRASE

The remainder of this article is a discursive account of how I teach the verb phrase system, chosen because it is a part of the language about which many errors center and because I believe the single most powerful tool for getting the endings right remains inaccessible to most Basic Writing teachers and their students.

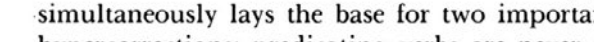
In the paragraphs written below, I have assumed that my reader is a beginning Basic Writing teacher working with classes in which there are large numbers of students with very strong dialect interference. Thus I have laid out, in considerable detail, the steps by which principles can be introduced, re-inforced, elaborated, re-inforced again, and so on, on the assumption that something like a syllabus would be most useful and most illustrative of the pedagogical principles and grammatical eclecticism of which I have written. I try to forestall the procedural pitfalls into which I have fallen. Many suggested strategies below begin,

"If the class needs additional practice...." Obviously, the instructor must gauge what suits each class at its level out of all that is suggested, what is suitable for the total class, what is suitable for selected students. He must also decide the balance between work in class and work out of class.

The most useful description of the verb for the Basic Writing student is probably a rather formidable-looking transformational-generative phrase structure rule, slightly adapted, which the student can use for proofreading:

VP→-T (modal -ϕ) (have -en) (be -ing) (be -en) MV.

Fortunately, the rule looks a lot more formidable than it is, and the statement of the rule can be postponed until all the groundwork has been laid. The process of arriving at the rule leaves the student with a vivid image of the structure of the verb phrase as a set of interlocking relations, rather like a set of interlocking, elongated *U*'s:



. The special appropriateness of this formulation for the Basic Writing student, characteristically plagued by inflectional omissions, is that it makes the point that it takes a tense-marked verb to predicate and that it calls attention to the endings, always indicated by hyphens, which must be attached and to the auxiliaries with which they pair up or "co-occur." It simultaneously lays the base for two important rules that cover the hypercorrections: predicating verbs are never marked for tense more than once, and infinitive phrases are never marked for tense at all. One rule will cover this field. A teacher who works through the exercise below—the same one to be done by the student—knows enough to teach the rule.

Before teaching the phrase structure rule itself, it is helpful to get the students well-grounded in a number of preliminary concepts, so that the rule functions as a summation of what they have already learned. These grammatical concepts include the sentence, person, subject-verb agreement, the present and past progressive, the present and past perfect, and the simple past.

I have already discussed my strategies for teaching sentence recognition by phrase and dependent clause equivalents of simple sentences.

With regard to person, all the student needs to see is that the personal pronouns are a system of shorthand for relating the speaker and listener to the fact reported in a sentence. Students almost never have trouble with the concept of person in actual practice: They find it very easy to draw the distinction between the person(s) speaking, the person(s) spoken to, and the person(s) spoken about. They may enjoy demonstrating their facility in short oral exercises. Names of students in

any class can be substituted in the two sentences below:

Vanessa sold Carlos' dictionary to Susan and Tony.

Robert and Mary bought Sandra's dictionary from Paula.

Each person named is asked to report the fact to each of the other persons named, replacing each proper name with a pronoun, and last of all to report the fact to someone not named. This brief exercise should end with the traditional paradigm of first, second, and third persons, singular and plural, and with the observation that, while personal pronouns can be all three persons, nouns are always third person, either singular or plural. Thus, Vanessa would say to Carlos, "I sold your dictionary to her and him (or them)." To Susan she would say, "I sold his dictionary to you and him." To Tony she would say, "I sold his dictionary to her and you." And so on, with Carlos, Susan and Tony speaking in turn.

Having established the paradigm of the personal pronouns, the instructor can easily turn to the problem of subject-verb agreement, by having students convert sentences in the simple past to the present. Here the instructor can anticipate points he will want to work with in more detail later by using a regular verb like *kiss, crash, smash,* an irregular verb like *drive, choose, break,* as well as *do, have,* and *be,* which are potentially auxiliaries. The student should work through five paradigms of eight sentences (one each for *I, you, he, she, it, we, you, they,* including separate practice for the singular and plural *you*) beginning *I kissed the baby, I took special classes, I did the work well, I had a high fever, I was quite old-fashioned.* The student should answer the following questions about each of the past paradigms before shifting it to the present:

(1) How many different forms of the verb are used to convey the simple past tense of the verb *kiss?* _____

(2) What is this form? _____

(3) How does this form differ from the base form *kiss?* _____

For the verb *be,* question (2) should read

(2) What are these forms? _____

and question (3) should have several parts:

(3) How do these forms differ from the base form *be?* _____
Which pronouns use *was?* _____
Which pronouns use *were?* _____
Can the language be consistent about using *were* with both *you*'s singular and plural, and about using *was* with singular

forms?_____All languages are full of such inconsistencies.

After shifting each paradigm to the present, the student should answer the questions given below. Notice that the concept of the "zero" ending is introduced, a concept that proves very helpful to students who tend to generalize the *-s*. These questions should be answered the first time, after the first paradigm, by the class as a whole, to insure that students do not practice incorrect forms, and the paradigms should themselves be checked as work is in progress, so that the instructor can begin to tell who is confused in principle as well as in practice, who tends to omit endings, who is prone to hyper-corrections.

(1) How many different forms of the base verb *kiss* are used to convey the simple present tense? _____

(2) What are these two forms? _____

(3) What ending is added to the base form *kiss* in the third person singular?
How do you explain the extra *e*? _____

(4) What ending is added everywhere else? _____

(Here it is important to play up the importance of "no ending at all," "nothing," "a zero," and to introduce the symbol -$\emptyset$ as a symbol that will be used for "zero" endings.)

(5) Thus we can say that the present tense is signalled by using two endings:_____ on the verbs used with third person singular subjects and _____ on the verbs used with all other subjects.

The questions asked about the present forms of *be* have to be modified to reflect the paradigm.

(1) How many different forms of the base verb *be* are used to convey the simple present tense? _____

(2) What are these three forms? _____

(3) Which pronoun is used with *am*? _____

(4) Which pronouns are used with *is*? _____

(5) Which pronouns are used with *are*? _____

After the student has completed all five paradigms in the present, he is led to draw three conclusions:

(1) Except for the verb *be,* all verbs show subject-verb agreement in the present by adding *-s* or *-es* to the base form of the verb for third person singular subjects and zero or -$\emptyset$ endings everywhere else.

(2) Except for the verb *be*, past tense forms do not vary to agree with the subject. One common form covers all subjects. In the verbs examined, the past was shown by an *-ed* ending, a vowel change, and a combination of a vowel change and *-d* ending (*did*).

(3) The verb *be* must be memorized separately.

While the instructor is on the subject of subject-verb agreement, he can make the point that the verbs *do*, *have*, and *be* behave exactly the same way, whether they are main verbs or "helpers." This principle can be demonstrated first by having the students turn some or all of their paradigms, five past and five present, into questions, emphatics (as if denying an assertion to the contrary), negatives, and negative questions. (This is a strategy suggested by sector analysis or tagmemic grammar and its teaching version, x-word grammar). In these conversions, students focus on agreement in the present, and on contractions in the negative.

Next in order of difficulty, the student can turn up to eight of his paradigms to past and present progressives (progressives of *I have/had a fever* are semantically awkward). As a first step, the student double checks the accuracy of his subject-verb agreements with all forms of *be*. Next, in anticipation of the transformational generative phrase structure rule, where the principle operates on a grander scale, the instructor has the student (1) circle all forms of *be*, (2) circle whatever ending pairs up with it *-ing*, attached to the main verb, (3) connect the two with a line, as in this example:

I am kissing the *baby*.

and (4) conclude that progressive tenses require both a form of the verb *be* and the *-ing* ending. If further drill on agreement seems necessary, the progressives may be converted to questions, negatives, negative questions, and contracted affirmatives. Again, the student first double-checks his agreement, optionally circles the forms of *be* and the *-ing* endings if further re-inforcement seems necessary.

Last of all, because of the irregularity of the past participle forms, the student practices subject-verb agreement with auxiliary *have*, by converting *all* of the paradigms to the past and present perfect, in that order. Again, the student first double checks the accuracy of his subject-verb agreements in the present perfect forms. Then the class can turn its attention to the range of endings that pair up with *have*. In anticipation of the system to be used in explaining the phrase structure rule, toward which the class is close approaching, students are led to (1) box all forms of *have*, (2) box all endings on the main verb which are different from the root form (3) connect the two with a line, as in the example:

I have kissed the baby.

and (4) conclude that the perfective tenses require a form of the verb *have* and a variant of the base form: *-ed* for regular verbs like *kiss*, and a lot of different forms for irregular verbs; *-en* for verbs like *take, be* and even *do* (and *go*) where the *-en* is reversed to *-ne*, and many other differently marked forms, for example, vowel shifts (*rung*), vowel shifts with final *-t* and *-d* (*brought/sold*) and even *-ϕ* forms (*let*). If subject-verb agreement errors persist, the class or individual students may, as before, practice further by converting their present perfect paradigms to questions, negations, negative questions, and contracted affirmatives.

This is the time to give the students a take-home diagnostic exercise in which they are to convert present tense sentences (most of them with third person singular subjects) using the irregular verbs to the simple past and present perfect, which they are to complete without reference to their grammar books. They should be told that the exercise is intended to help them pin-point the verbs that give them trouble. Although I go over this exercise in class, I do not spend additional class time drilling the irregular verbs. I give the students a list of the common ones, tell them to mark the verbs that tripped them, to drill themselves, and to consult the list when in doubt.

The last topic covered before the phrase structure rule is the simple past. Students are given ten sentences in the present, containing five regular verbs and five irregular verbs which suggest the range of past tense marking: for example *let, hit,* or *put* for *-ϕ*; *ring, drive,* or *take* for vowel shift; *sleep, catch,* or *buy* for vowel shift and final *-t*; *do, ride,* or *say* for shift and *-d*; and *go* for a totally anomalous form. Few students will have difficulty getting all the pasts correct in an exercise of this sort, where the task is simple and their attention is focused, even though many of them will not pronounce many regular past endings and will omit them in free writing. Here the point of the exercise is that the system for the irregular verbs is so complex that it is a mercy that there are relatively few of them and that the vast majority of verbs take a past with *-d* or *-ed*.

The last activity before taking up the verb phrase rule is an oral dictation and proofreading exercise. The passage used pulls together all the verb forms where the students are most likely to make mistakes because of systematic differences in the phonological rules of their dialects: the omitted third person singular *-s* and regular past, *-ed,* especially where their addition would create a consonant cluster, confusion of *-en* and *-ing*, especially in complex verb phrases using *eat, take, shake, be, fall* and *give* where the present and past participles are identical in casual speech (*been* and *being* almost so for Spanish

speakers), *of* for the contraction of *have*, and the hypercorrect infinitives and modals with *-ed*, the over-generalized third person singular *-s*.

In dictating the passage, the ground rules are that the instructor will dictate all punctuation and capitalization where it belongs but take no questions on spelling. In dictating the passage, the instructor should avoid over-pronouncing the terminal endings, but carefully break into syllables the polysyllabic words like *momentarily*, in order to provide some distraction from what is really being tested. Or, in order to maximize the effects of dialect interference, the instructor can have a student with strong dialect persistence in careful speech dictate the passage, giving only sentence-beginning capitals, commas and periods, having given the student several minutes to practice reading the passage over and to ask questions about pronunciation. Here is a passage suitable for dictation. The italicized elements are the anticipated trouble spots with the verb phrases.

> Late yesterday afternoon, President Jimmy Carter talk*ed* at length with key advisors about his new energy program. NBC's be*en* advis*ed* that President Carter would*'ve* reconven*ed* the meeting tonight, had he not realiz*ed* that he had already arrang*ed* an early morning meeting with Mr. Jody Powell, his press secretary, to confirm the details to be releas*ed* at a noon press conference today. Though the President apparently felt press*ed* for time at the end, his comprehensive twelve point program comes several weeks earlier than initially plann*ed*. Working out details could*'ve* tak*en* much longer, if a small army of staff people had not be*een* giv*ing* weeks to developing the program during the transition period. Mr. Powell has just announc*ed* the details of the policy, and we*'ll* be giv*ing* you those details momentarily.

After the students have been given several minutes to proofread their papers individually, the instructor collects them, and gives out the following passage to be proofread. Here students may work productively in teams.

> Late yesterday afternoon, President Jimmy Carter talk at length with key advisors about his new energy program. NBC is been advise that President Carter would of reconvene the meeting tonight, had he not realize that he had already arrange an early morning meeting with Mr. Jody Powell, his press secretary, to confirmed the details to be release at a noon press conference today. Though the President apparently felt press for time at the end, his comprehensive twelve-point program come several weeks earlier than initially plan. Working out details could of taking much longer, if a small army of

staff people had not being given weeks to developing the program during the transition period. Mr. Powell is just announce the details of the policy, and we be given you those details momentarily.

At the end of the hour, the instructor re-reads the initial passage, having the class dictate the forms that he transcribes on the board. The instructor concludes the hour by announcing that the class will take up a rule for getting all verb forms right during the next class hour.

The student is now ready to take on the phrase structure rule itself. I have found it most effective to combine work on the blackboard with mimeographed sheets covering the same materials, which the student can consult and work from later.

Step 1. (One class hour) The instructor hands out a list of the following verb phrases and puts an identical set on the board. A single column is best, but it is here divided for reasons of space. The instructor asks for suggestions for grouping the verb phrases in some systematic way that will point to the similarities and differences between them. He then allows students five to ten minutes to try drawing lines between what belongs together, each pursuing his own scheme.

He *drives.*	He *would have driven.*
He *was driving.*	*He has been driving.*
He *has driven.*	He *will be driving.*
He *drove.*	He *will have been driving.*
He *had driven.*	He *would have been driving.*
He *will drive.*	He *had been driving.*
He *would drive.*	He *will have driven.*
He *is driving.*	He *would be driving.*

The instructor asks several students what they connected, what the similarity was they saw, and what they had left over. He then suggests that they match the verb phrases into pairs, working from the shortest and simplest verb phrases with fewest words, to the longest and most complex, and pairing the verb phrases so that there is only one difference between the two items in a pair. Students then examine, in turn, one-word verb phrases, two-word verb phrases, three-word verb phrases, and four-word verb phrases. As the students pair up the verb phrases, the instructor uses the remaining board space to arrange the matched pairs into two columns. He should elicit comments from the students on the differences in the meanings between the two items in the matched pair, but not, of course, in technical language. This difference will always be to mark the two verb phrases differently for time, with regard to

presentness and pastness, an opposition the instructor will want to emphasize in his rephrasing of student responses. The nature of the present-past opposition is, however, sometimes rather oblique. For example, the difference between "He *will have been driving* a school bus for forty years come next September 1" and "He *would have been driving* a school bus for for forty years come next September 1" is that the former refers to a state of affairs the speaker *now* believes to be possible of future attainment, and the latter refers to a state of affairs whose possibility of attainment the speaker believes to be already in the *past*, no longer possible because of some event already in the *past*. Similarly, the difference between *will go* and *would go* is that the former refers to an action the speaker believes to be the present intention of the subject, for future action; and the latter refers, in informal use, to habitual action in the past (John *would* always *go*) or, more formally, to some possible action the speaker believes to be contingent upon another action itself judged to be, not so much past, as not present, not now actual, and not likely. The resulting two columns on the board look like this:

PRESENT	*PAST*
He *drives.*	*He drove.*
He *is driving.*	He *was driving.*
He *has driven.*	He *had driven.*
He *will drive.*	He *would drive.*
He *will be driving.*	He *would be driving.*
He *has been driving.*	He *had been driving.*
He *will have driven.*	He *would have driven.*
He *will have been driving.*	He *would have been driving.*

Step 2. (Homework) The student takes a list of 16 verb phrases using the verb *eat*, and classifies them into 8 matched pairs.

Step 3. (Two class hours. Don't rush). The instructor then leads the students to see that some of the auxiliaries pair up with endings which are attached "one word over" that is, to the next or adjacent word in the verb phrase. He hands out a second sheet, identical to the two columns at Step 1 above except with double or triple spacing between the entries and the following 20 questions. Students carry out the following set of instructions, individually, in small groups, or following the work on the board, as the teacher judges best. I prefer small teams of 2 or 3 working together, on subsets of questions (1-5, 6-10, 11-13, 14-16, 17, 18-20) with board work in between. Answers are given in parentheses.

1. Circle all forms of the verb *be*. Forms of *be* include *am, is, are, was, were, been, be.*

2. What ending do you find occurring in the verb phrase *every* time that a form of *be* occurs (*-ing*) _____

3. Where is this ending found? (on the next word)_____

4. Circle this ending, and draw a line to connect the ending to the form of *be* with which it pairs up, for example

   He is driving.

5. Since the helping verb *be* and its co-occurring ending *-ing* do not occur in every verb phrase, but in only 8 of our 16 examples, we will put both *be* and *-ing* in parentheses ( ), to show it is an optional, not necessary component of the verb phrase. From now on we will usually refer to (be -ing) to indicate that *be* as a helping verb will signal an *-ing* on the word in the verb phrase one word over. If one occurs, both will occur. But both may be absent.

6. Box all forms of the verb *have*. Forms of *have* include *have, has, had.*

7. What ending do you find occurring in every verb phrase which contains the helping verb *have*? (*-en*) _____

8. Where is this ending found? (on the next word)_____

9. Box this ending, and draw a line to connect the ending to the form of *have* with which it pairs up, for example:

   He has driven.

10. Since the helping verb *have* and its co-occurring ending *-en* do not occur in every verb phrase, but in only 8 of our 16 examples, we will put it in parentheses ( ), as we did with (be -ing). From now on we will usually refer to (have -en) to indicate that *have* as a helping verb will signal the *-en* ending on the word in the verb phrase located next. If *have* occurs as a helper, the *-en* ending will also occur. Both, however, may be omitted. The *-en* will stand for all the endings which co-occur with *have* such as *-ed* (I have kiss*ed*) and *-ϕ* (I have h*it*).

11. Underline any other helping verbs which occur in the verb phrase.

12. *-ing* and *-en* endings have already been accounted for. Is there any remaining ending which co-occurs with a modal helper like *will*

and *would* (no) _____. Modals put a "zero" or -ϕ ending on the word one to the right.

13. Since modal helpers like *will* and *would* do not occur in every verb phrase, but in only 8 of our 16 examples, we will put the word *modal* in parentheses, to show that it, like (have -en) and (be -ing) is an optional rather than necessary part of the verb phrase. From now on we will refer to (modal -ϕ). Other modals include *can, could, shall, should, may, might.*

14. In pairing up our verb phrases, we discovered that there was a time or tense distinction between the item in the left hand column and its mate in the right hand column. Go back now and put a sunburst  around the word which carries this time distinction.

15. The word which carries the time distinctions is always found in the same position or order in the words in the verb phrase. What is this position? (*the first word in the verb phrase*) _____

16. We noted earlier that (be -ing), (have -en), and (modal -ϕ) were not present in all verb phrases, and were therefore "optional" components of the verb phrases, sometimes present, sometimes absent. Every verb phrase has at least two components, however, even the simplest one word predicating verbs, like *drives* and *drove*. Every verb phrase contains a main verb, MV, and a second kind of meaning. What is that meaning? (*time, or tense*). _____ From now on, we will refer to tense marking by the symbol -T, with a hyphen to show it is always attached to some other word, and without parentheses, to show that it *always* occurs.

17. Let us now look at the way the tense difference is marked in our verb phrases. If we look down our left-hand PRESENT column of verb phrases, noting the words with the sunbursts around them, we see two patterns. When the verb is a one word verb like *drives*, or when the first helping verb is *is* or *has* (*is driving, has driven, has been driving*), the present tense is marked by the use of a form which contains the final letter (-s). Note that the subject is third person singular. Other persons use -ϕ endings.

    When the first helping verb in the verb phrase is a modal, like *will*, or like *can, may, shall,* there is no extra ending. Modals do not show subject-verb agreement in the present tense. All modals are -ϕ marked in the present.

    When we look at our right hand column of PAST tenses, we see many patterns. In a one word verb like *drove*, the pastness of the

verb is shown not by adding an ending, but by changing a vowel in the middle of the word. The vowel that makes *drive* past is the letter (o). Some past tenses are formed by changing a vowel in the middle of the word.

When the first helping verb is the past form of *be*, it has a unique form; *was* for the first and third persons, *were* everywhere else.

When the first helping verb is the past of *have*, the past is indicated by a new ending, the letter (*-d*), which replaces the *-ve*.

When the first helping verb is a modal like *will, can, may, shall*, the past form is indicated by combining a vowel change in the middle with different endings of (*-t*) and (*-d*) to produce *would, could, might, should.*

By far the most common past ending is the regular verb *-ed*. We will use *-ed* as a symbol for the full range of past endings.

As a kind of shorthand, we can say:
Tense is either present or past:

-T ⟶ pres./past

Present tense is marked by *-s* or -ϕ:

-pres ⟶ -s/-ϕ

Past tense is marked by *-ed*:

-past ⟶ -ed.

18. We are now in a position to reach some important conclusions about the verb phrase. One of these conclusions is that every verb phrase consists of, at the minimum, present or past tense or time marking, -T, and a main verb MV. As a kind of shorthand we can say:

VP⟶-T MV

or a verb phrase consists of tense marking grafted onto a main verb.

But we have already discovered that a number of auxiliary verbs, some of which require co-occurring endings, can also occur. These auxiliaries occur in a definite order. Fill in the optional elements that can intervene between tense marking and the main verb. There are, you remember, three of them: (be -ing) (have -en) (modal). There is one fixed order that accounts for all verb phrases. Can you figure out what it is? What, if present at all, always comes first? (modal -ϕ). Which comes first, (have -en) or (be -ing)? (have -en). Now try to get all three in the right order.

VP⟶-T ( ) ( ) ( ) MV

19. Bravo! You have arrived at a simple description of the structure of the verb phrase it took grammarians hundreds of years to discover. You can use it to proofread for the accuracy of every verb phrase you write. But you must remember the rule, and remember to use it. If you remember to use the rule as you proofread your papers, you will be able to correct almost all of your verb form errors. You must remember to tense mark the first word in every verb phrase, and to attach the endings that co-occur with *have* and *be*.

    Without looking back, can you state the rule? Try it:

    VP ⟶

20. Practice several more times until you are sure you have it etched in your memory.

    VP ⟶
    VP ⟶
    VP ⟶

Step 4. (Homework). Part 1. Students take a list of verb phrases identical to the second list in Step 2, except using the verb *eat* instead of *drive*, and these directions: (1) Circle every *be* and co-occurring *-ing* which pairs up with it, drawing a line to connect the circles. (2) Box every *have* and co-occurring *-en*, drawing a line to connect the boxes. (3) Underline every modal. (4) Draw a sunburst around the one word in each verb phrase which carries the tense or time marking. (5) State the rule for the structure of the English verb phrase: VP⟶
Practice writing this rule for the verb phrase until you can produce it easily. Review the classwork questions 1-20 if you do not understand why we use this rule with these parts in this order. Then, if you should forget the rule, you can reconstruct it.

Part 2. Here are 7 sentences with some necessary part of the verb phrase omitted. Add the missing element. Use your verb phrase rule to decide what is missing. Use connected circles to join *be* and its co-occurring ending *-ing* and connected boxes to join *have* and its co-occurring ending *-en*. Put a sunburst around the tense-marked word in the verb phrase.

1. The chicken is eat the contaminated grain.
2. The chicken has eat the contaminated grain.
3. The chicken has be eat the contaminated grain.
4. The chicken would have eat the contaminated grain.
5. The chicken would have be eat the contaminated grain.
6. The chicken eating the contaminated grain.
7. The chicken eaten the contaminated grain.

Step 5. (One class hour). The instructor hands out and goes over the following exercise.

Part I. All of the verb phrases we have looked at so far have been in the active voice. The subject of the sentence has been the agent of the action expressed by the verb. For example, John is the agent of the action of *driving* in the sentence below, and the word *bus* is the object of the action:

subject and agent	action	object
John	drives	a yellow school bus.

Verbs which have both subjects and objects also have passive voices. There the subject of the sentence is not the agent of the action, but somehow the recipient or object of the action. Notice that the agent now appears in a *by* phrase.

subject	action	agent of action
A yellow school bus	is driven	by John

Here are four passive voice sentences about the school bus, each using a different passive voice tense. Answer the questions below about them.

A. The big yellow school bus is driven by John.

B. The big yellow school bus has been driven by John.

C. The big yellow school bus is being driven by John.

D. The big yellow school bus would have been being driven by John.

1. In sentence A, what helping verb occurs?_____. What ending on the main verb co-occurs with it?_____. Go back, circling the helper and its co-occurring ending, and connecting the two circles with a line.

2. In Sentence B. what is the first helping verb?_____. What ending co-occurs with it?_____. Box this helper and its co-occurring ending, and connect the two boxes with a line.

3. In sentence C, what is the first helping verb?_____. What ending co-occurs with it?_____. Circle this helper and its co-occurring ending, and connect the circles with a line. What is the second helper in the verb phrase?_____. What ending co-occurs with it?_____. Circle this helper and its co-occurring ending, and connect these two circles with a line also. Now you are ready to draw two important conclusions. (1) When the helping verb *be* occurs, it may be followed by either of two endings, either _____ or _____. (2) When two forms of the helping verb *be* occur in the same verb phrase, the _____ (or progressive) ending precedes the _____ (or passive voice) ending.

4. In sentence D, what is the first helping verb?_____. Is it tense-marked present or past?_____. What is the second helping verb?_____. What ending co-occurs with it?_____. Box these two forms and connect them with a line. What is the third helping verb?_____. What ending co-occurs with it?_____. Circle these two forms and connect them with a line. What is the fourth helping verb?_____. What ending co-occurs with it?_____. Circle these two endings and connect them with a line. Does the helping verb *be* taking an *-ing* still occur before a helping *be* taking the passive *-en* ending?_____. Here is a restatement of our original verb phrase rule, given in shorthand, with spaces left for you to fill in the order of these two helping verbs and their co-occurring endings.

VP→-T (modal -ϕ) (have -en) ( ) ( ) MV

Part 2. The instructor distributes the passive voice equivalents of the seven sentences in Part 2 of Step 4, with the endings omitted. Students follow the same instructions, which are modified to incorporate the passive: "Use connected circles to join *be* and its co-occurring endings *-ing* and *-en*."

Step 6. (Homework) Part 1. The instructor gives out sixteen passive voice sentences using the verbs *give, shake, eat, take*, illustrating each of the sixteen verb phrase possibilities. The student is told to convert each sentence to its exact active voice equivalent, and to check the accuracy of his work by using the system of circles, boxes, and sunbursts. At the end of the conversion process, the student is asked to identify the helping verb and co-occurring ending that must always be removed from the verb phrase in converting it from the passive voice to the active voice. Part 2 consists of sixteen different active voice sentences using the same verbs, again illustrating the full range of verb phrase possibilities. The student

is told to convert these sentences to their exact passive voice equivalents, using the system of circles, boxes, and sunbursts to check the accuracy of his work. The instructions should remind the student that the passive voice equivalents of active voice tenses contain all the helping verbs (if any) found in the active voice, and an extra helping verb *be* and its co-occurring *-en* ending.

Step 7. Students work on converting passive voice sentences using regular verbs to the active voice, and active voice sentences to the passive voice. The student is reminded that the symbol *-en*, used for co-occurrence with *have* and *be*, stands for the full range of possibilities, including the *-ed*, which is very common and often hard to hear, thus hard to keep up with. In order to determine where interference is strongest for students, the exercises should include a few verbs like *pat*, *activate*, etc., where the *-ed*, if added, creates an extra syllable, a few like *slow*, where it would constitute a final consonant, and a great many like *push*, *shove*, *nab* where the ending, if added and pronounced, would produce a consonant cluster. As before, the student should use the verb phrase rule as a means of checking the accuracy of his conversions.

Step 8. Next comes oral dictation and proofreading of a passage containing *-ed* endings in the simple past, the present and past perfect, the future and conditional perfect, participial phrases using the past participle, and a variety of the passive voice tenses. Here again, regular verbs should be selected so that the terminal ending is realized in pronunciation, if pronounced, as *-ed*, *-d* and *-t*. The verb phrase rule is again used, and the past participles are analyzed as elliptical clauses, where the subject has sometimes been omitted and the first auxiliary either omitted or de-tensed by conversion to the *-ing* form. This is an opportune time for students to practice or review combining sentences that rewrite at least one sentence as a participial phrase, and to imitate sentences containing one or more.

Step 9. The instructor returns the original dictation passage concerning President Carter's energy policy with the number of errors in verb phrases indicated. The student is instructed to use the verb phrase rule to find all of his mistakes.

Step 10. The instructor dictates another passage, containing verb phrases with exactly the same potential sound confusions as the previous passage, i.e., *balked*, *stalked*, *walked*, for *talked* in the first sentence. The passage should be on a totally different subject with different sentence rhythms: "The aging lion stalked his prey patiently." After individual proofreading, the class dictates the passage for the

board, and students assess their progress from the first exercise.

Step 11. The student is instructed to proofread every paper specifically for verb phrase errors. For a few papers, the essays should actually be marked up according to the verb phrase system of circles, boxes, underlinings and sunbursts. For the past participles of irregular verbs, students should box the terminal *-t, -d, -ed, -en,* and *-ne* endings or the constant - ϕ marked vowel (*put, let, hit*).

APPENDIX A

Exercise I. Students may benefit from repeated practice at steps B and C, before moving on to D, depending on the difficulty they have with these constructions. In this exercise, the student must negotiate the *as... as* comparison, proper reference for the final *that* clause, and the semantic constraints of *-ly* adverbs co-ordinated with *but,* as well as two other easier internal co-ordinations. Notice that the student is given hints and procedural advice at C 1 and D 2, where he is most likely to make his mistakes.

A 1. Here are six sentences. Study them until you think you see the relationships between them.

A direct message from malevolent gods is cruel.
The gently falling snow was as cruel as that.
The snow sifted through the branches of the tree.
It settled upon the woman and her child.
It slowly but relentlessly filled any tracks.
The tracks might have led rescuers to them.

A 2. Here are the six sentences combined, with the key structural words and endings italicized. Compare this sentence with the six sentences above.

(2) *As* cruel *as* a direct message from malevolent gods,
(1) the gently falling snow sifted through the branches of the tree,
(2) settl*ing* upon the woman *and* her child,
(2) slow*ly but* relentless*ly* fill*ing* any tracks
(3) *that* might have led rescuers to them.

B 1. Here are six more sentences, similar to the six you started with.

The bawl of a calf is loud.
The cry of the child was as loud as that.
The cry of the child pierced the dark silence.
It startled the cows and cow pony.

It distantly but repeatedly echoed from the cliffs.
The cliffs rose from the canyon floor.

B 2. Combine these six sentences, using the same key structural elements, in the space below.

(2) As _____ as _____.
(1) _____,
(2) _____ ly but _____ly _____ing _____
(3) that _____.

C 1. Here are two more sentences with blanks left for you to create sentences of your own. Make the sentences you add structurally similar to those at A 1 and B 1. Pay close attention to your sixth sentence. The subject of your sixth sentence must be taken from the *end* of your fifth sentence.

Any schoolboy is restless on the first beautiful day of spring.

_____ as _____ as that.

John sat at the desk in his bedroom.

He _____ and _____.

He _____ ly but _____ ly _____.

_____.

C 2. Here is a frame for combining your sentences according to the pattern you saw at A 2 and B 2.

(2) As _____ as _____.
(1) _____,
(2) _____ ing _____ and _____,
(2) _____ ly but _____ ly _____,
(3) that _____.

D 1. Here are lines for six sentences, this time of your own composition entirely. Make them structurally similar to the sentences A 1, B 1, and C 1 by using the specified words. Write your third sentence *first*. Otherwise you may have difficulty deciding what two things you are comparing, and with regard to what common characteristic.

_____ is _____.
_____ as _____ as that.
_____.
_____ and _____.
_____ ly but _____ ly _____ *ing* _____.
_____.

D 2. Here is a frame for combining your sentences according to the pattern you have been using throughout this exercise.

(2) As _____ as _____,
(1) _____.
(2) _____ ing _____ and _____,
(2) _____ ly but _____ ly _____ ing _____,
(3) that _____.

Exercise II. Note that the usual order of composing simpler sentences before combining them is reversed in the D part of this exercise, with the result that the student imitates the more complex structure first. Composing a sensible introductory adverbial clause of concession requires fore-knowledge of the content of the main clause which follows it. If the simpler sentences are done first, the first sentence the student thinks of may well be the idea that belongs in the main clause (sentence 3, beginning *But...*), but he will have written it in the targeted concession position (sentence 2).

A 1. Here is a list of twelve sentences. Study them until you think you see the relationships between them and how you might want to combine them. Use braces { } to group the sentences you would want to combine.

1. People oppose standardized tests for three major reasons.
2. The tests are supposed to measure mathematical and verbal skills.
3. But they also measure test-taking skills.
4. They also measure kinds of cultural knowledge.
5. These kinds of cultural knowledge are not at all related to intelligence.
6. These kinds of cultural knowledge discriminate against lower-class and minority students.
7. Many test items are reasonable.
8. However, a significant number are demonstrably misleading, confusing, or ambiguous.
9. As a result, no one can answer them intelligently.
10. Standardized testing encourages invidious comparisons of teachers.
11. It encourages invidious comparisons of the school systems.
12. Worst of all, it encourages invidious comparisons of the students by their parents, their teachers, and the students themselves.

A 2. Here is one way the twelve sentences might be grouped and combined, with the key structural words underlined. Compare this set of four sentences with the twelve sentences above. Notice that a number of new words have been added, to clarify the relationships between ideas, and that a number of other words have been dropped. Circle two words and one phrase that appear in the sentences in A 1, but nowhere in A 2. Then circle 7 words and 1 word group that appear in A 2, but nowhere in A 1.

(1) People oppose standardized testing for three reasons.

First,

(2) *although* the tests are supposed to measure mathematical and verbal skills,

(1) they also measure test-taking skills *and* kinds of cultural knowledge

(2) *that* are not at all related to intelligence

(2) and that discriminate against lower-class and minority students.

Second,

(2) *although* many test items are reasonable,

(1) a significant number are demonstrably misleading, confusing, or ambiguous

(2) *so that* no one can answer them intelligently.

Third,

(1) standardized testing encourages invidious comparisons of the teachers, the school systems, *and*, worst of all, the students, by their parents, their teachers, and the students themselves.

B 1. Here are twelve more sentences, similar to the twelve you just examined in A 1. As before, study the sentences until you see the relationships between them. Use braces to group the sentences you want to combine.

1. People support standardized tests for three major reasons.
2. It is probably impossible to design an entirely culture-free test.
3. But standardized tests measure mainly mathematical and verbal skills.
4. Standardized tests measure secondarily a number of important personality traits.
5. These skills and traits are strong predictors of future success in an academic environment.

6. These skills and traits are much needed in almost all white collar occupations.
7. A few test items are undeniably poor.
8. However, openly published practice tests would encourage professional discussion and wider consensus about what students should know.
9. As a result, teachers could teach the appropriate skills and information.
10. Standardized testing provides valuable information about student performance.
11. It provides valuable information about the effectiveness of specific teachers and teaching methods.
12. It provides valuable information about the success or failure of entire school systems in imparting the skills and information they should be teaching.

B 2. Here is a frame for combining the twelve sentences given at B 1 according to the model that appears at A 2. The key structural words are given. Notice that you will have to omit some words from the original sentences.

(1) People support standardized tests for three major reasons.

First,

(2) although _____ ,

(1) _____

(2) that _____

(2) and that _____ .

Second,

(2) although _____ ,

(1) _____

(2) so that _____ .

Third,

(1) _____ ,

_____ ,

and _____

_____ .

C 1. Here is another group of 12 sentences, or sentence parts, parallel to those you worked with at A 1 and B 1. Here the topic is gun control and three reasons why some people oppose it. Study the sentences you are given, and complete the missing sentences in a way that makes good sense.

1. People raise three objections to gun control.
2. They admit that some lives are needlessly lost through accident or homicides.
3. But they argue that the right to own and bear arms is ___ _____ .
4. The right to bear arms is also a second amendment constitutional guarantee.
5. This guarantee _____ _____ .
6. This guarantee _____ _____ .
7. Gun control doesn't sound like gun confiscation.
8. However, the registration of firearms _____ _____ .
9. As a result_____ _____ .
10. Gun control punishes the lawful sportsman and gun owner instead of the dealer in illegally-imported foreign-made handguns.
11. Gun control punishes the lawful sportsman and gun owner instead of the_____ _____ .
12. Gun control punishes the lawful sportsman and gun owner instead of the_____ _____ .

C 2. Here is a frame for combining your twelve sentences according to the model you have already used at B 2.

(1) People raise three objections to gun control.
First,

(2) although_____ _____ ,

(1) _____
_____
(2) that _____
_____
(2) and that _____
_____ .

Second,
(2) although _____
_____ ,
(1) _____
_____
(2) so that _____
_____ .

Third,
(1) _____
_____
_____ ,
_____ ,
and _____
_____ .

D 1. Here is another frame, identical to the one you just filled in C 2. Fill it with content of your own, picking from among the following topic sentences.

Supporters of gun control advance three major reasons.
People favor busing to achieve racial integration for three major reasons.
People oppose busing to achieve racial integration for three major reasons.
The right-to-life opponents of abortion advance three strong reasons in support of their position.
Advocates of abortion-on-demand give three strong arguments for their position.

(1) _____
_____ .

First,
(2) although _____
_____ ,
(1) _____
_____

(2) that _____
_____
(2) and that _____
_____ .

Second,
(2) although _____
_____ ,
(1) _____
_____
(2) so that _____
_____ .

Third,
(1) _____
_____
_____ ,
_____ ,
and _____
_____ .

D 2. Here is space for twelve sentences, parallel to those you worked with in A 1, B 1, and C 1. Take the combined sentences you wrote in the frame at D 1, and rewrite them to be simpler, shorter sentences, with the specified structural words given.

1. _____ .
2. _____
_____ .
3. But _____
_____ .
4. _____
_____ .
5. _____
_____ .
6. _____
_____ .
7. _____
_____ .
8. However, _____
_____ .
9. As a result, _____
_____ .
10. _____
_____ .

11. _____

_____ .

12. _____

_____ .

E. 1. As the final part of this exercise, you will learn a method for doubling the length and substance of any essay you write. You will learn how to turn a single paragraph into an essay of several paragraphs. In order to develop a good essay, you need to produce more real content, not extra empty words or mere repetitions of what you have already said. To produce more real content, you need strategies for finding more things to say.

One way of saying more is adding qualifying, descriptive detail. This detail often influences the reader's perceptions and judgments in subtle ways, by revealing what the author considered noteworthy, or by revealing the author's attitudes and judgments. Here are the first two sentences of the passage on standardized tests with some qualifying details added. The new details are italicized.

(1) *Many thoughtful* people *who have studied both sides of the question carefully* oppose standardized tests for three major reasons, *all of them valid.*

(2) The tests, *which are used for tracking, promotion, graduation, college entrance, and job qualification,* are supposed to measure mathematical and verbal skills.

Another way to generate content is to give concrete examples of illustrations that are very exact and specific. Here are the third and fourth sentences expanded in this way:

(2) But they also measure other test-taking skills, *such as penmanship, neatness, familiarity with specific test formats, self-confidence and calmness under stress.*

(4) They also measure kinds of cultural knowledge, *such as familiarity with the traditions of classical music, British and American literary classics, and elitist sports like squash, polo, and boating.*

Another way to expand the essay is by restating the same idea in different words, from a different angle, or with different emphasis. In pursuing this strategy, you must be careful to avoid being simply repetitious. Here are the fifth and sixth sentences followed by a clarifying restatement:

(5) These kinds of cultural knowledge are not at all related to intelligence. *They are only measures of exposure to parts of our culture which enjoy prestige among the upper classes.*

(6) These kinds of cultural knowledge discriminate against lower class and minority students. *Test items about the musical achievements of Coleman Hawkins, the rules of stick ball, and the dirty dozens would discriminate against most students attending prep schools in the same way.*

Yet another way to expand the original paragraph is by laying out in further detail the process you are analyzing, for example, by giving additional reasons for coming to the same conclusion. Here are sentences raising one objection to test items, followed by other reasons for finding some test items objectionable.

(7) Many test items are reasonable. (8) However, a significant number are demonstrably misleading, confusing, or ambiguous. (9) As a result, no one can answer them intelligently. *Others test trivial and disputed points of information, such as whether good usage permits split infinitives. Others cover areas in which there are on-going breakthroughs, so that an item inevitably penalizes the student who keeps abreast or the student taught the recently outdated "fact."*

Here is sentence 6 followed by an analysis of further results that flow from culturally biased questions on standardized tests:

(6) These kinds of cultural knowledge discriminate against lower class and minority students. *Because these test results are used for tracking, promotion, graduation, college entrance and admission to graduate professional schools, very able but culturally disadvantaged students are cut off from the quality education that would give them economic and social mobility. Meanwhile, less able but luckier middle and upper class students automatically reap the social and economic benefits of better birth and superior education. Standardized testing reinforces and perpetuates the inequities in our society.*

You will find two essays below which take the original sentences, already developed, and a little more additional information. The first essay presents the information in the order suggested by the twelve sentences we started with.

Many thoughtful people *who have studied both sides of the question carefully oppose standardized tests for three major reasons, all of them valid.*

First, the tests, *which are used for tracking, promotion, graduation, college entrance, and job qualification,* are supposed to measure mathematical and verbal skills. But they also measure other test-taking skills, *such as penmanship, neatness, familiarity with specific test formats, self-confidence, and calmness under stress.* They also measure kinds of cultural knowledge, *such as familiarity with the traditions of classical music, British and American literary classics, and elitist sports like squash, polo, and boating.* These kinds of cultural knowledge are not at all related to intelligence. *They are only measures of exposure to parts of our culture which enjoy prestige among the upper classes.* These kinds of cultural knowledge *obviously* discriminate against lower-class and minority students. *Test items about the musical achievements of Coleman Hawkins, the rules of stick ball, and the dirty dozens would discriminate against most students attending prep schools in the same way. Because these test results are used for tracking, promotion, graduation, college entrance, admission to graduate professional schools, and so on, very able but culturally disadvantaged students are cut off from the quality education that would give them economic and social mobility. Meanwhile, less able but luckier middle and upper-class students automatically reap the social and economic benefits of better birth and superior education. Standardized testing reinforces and perpetuates the inequities of our society.*

Second, although many test items are reasonable, *objections can be raised* to a significant number of them. *Some* are demonstrably misleading, confusing, or ambiguous. As a result no one can answer them intelligently. *Others test trivial and disputed points of information, such as whether good usage permits split infinitives. Others cover areas in which there are on-going break-throughs, so that an item inevitably penalizes the student who keeps abreast or the student taught the out-dated "fact."*

Third, standardized testing encourages invidious comparisons of teachers, of school systems, and worst of all, of the

students themselves, by their parents, their teachers and by the students themselves. *Everyone accepts the results as accurate representations of ability. Teachers expect less of themselves and of their students when they believe they are working with low ability students. Central administrations become demoralized, accepting the poor showing as normal, natural, and inevitable. The worst damage, however, is done to the individual student. Tracked into a slow class, persuaded he is a dummy, he allows a test score, inaccurate and inadequate to begin with, to become a self-fulfilling prophecy of his achievement in life.*

The second essay rearranges the order of the original sentences, alters some of them slightly, and adds a little more information. Which of the essays do you prefer? Why? Do you have reservations about both?

Many thoughtful people *who have studied both sides* of the question carefully oppose standardized tests for two major reasons, *both of them valid.*

First, they raise objections to a significant number of the test items *and to the testing process itself. Although* many test items are reasonable, *some* are demonstrably misleading, confusing, or ambiguous, *so that* no one can answer them intelligently. *Others test trivial and disputed points of information, such as whether good usage permits split infinitives. Others cover areas in which there are on-going break-throughs, so that an item inevitably penalizes the student who keeps abreast or the student taught the recently out-dated "fact."* Some questions measure kinds of cultural *knowledge, such as familiarity with the traditions of classical music, British and American literary classics, and elitist sports like squash, polo, and boating.* These kinds of cultural knowledge are not at all related to intelligence, *and such test items obviously* discriminate against lower-class and minority students, *who lack exposure to many parts of our culture which enjoy prestige among the upper classes, just as questions about the musical achievements of Coleman Hawkins, the rules of stick ball, and the dirty dozens would discriminate against most students attending prep schools.* Even when the test items measure the mathematical and verbal skills they are supposed to, they measure test-taking skills *such as penmanship, neatness, familiarity with specific test formats, self-confidence, and calmness under stress.*

This indirect measurement of test-taking skills is also likely to penalize the disadvantaged student.

Their second objection is to all the harmful effects of standardized testing. It encourages invidious comparisons of teachers, of school systems, and worst of all, of the students themselves, by their parents, their teachers, and by *each other. Everyone accepts the results as accurate representations of ability. Teachers expect less of themselves and of their students when they believe they are working with low ability students. Central administrations become demoralized, accepting the poor showing as normal, natural, and inevitable. The worst damage, however, is done to the individual student. Tracked into a slow class, persuaded he is a dummy, he allows a test score, inaccurate and inadequate to begin with, to become a self-fulfilling prophecy of his achievement in life. Unfortunately, the harmful results reach beyond the individual. Because these test results are used everywhere—for tracking, promotion, graduation, college entrance, admission to graduate professional schools, and job qualification—very able but culturally disadvantaged students are cut off at every turn from the quality education that would give them economic and social mobility, while less able but luckier middle and upper-class students automatically reap the social and economic benefits of better birth and superior education. Standardized testing reinforces and perpetuates the inequities of our society.*

Now take the twelve sentences at B 1, C 1, or D 2 and see if you can generate additional content for six or more of them. After you have generated the additional content, decide whether you need to rearrange the order of the original sentences and to restructure the essay generally.

David M. Davidson

SENTENCE COMBINING IN AN ESL WRITING PROGRAM

The teaching of English as a Second Language has undergone radical changes in recent years, and nowhere have these changes been more evident than in our colleges and universities. The influx of "new" ESL students—those with limited skills in their native language—has forced traditionally trained instructors to reevaluate their methods and materials; the particular demands of academic work at this level have focussed attention on the need to develop appropriate reading and writing skills; and increased professional contact between instructors of ESL and those engaged in remediation efforts with native speaking and second dialect students has led to recognition of certain common problems and solutions in what has often been regarded as distinct and separate pedagogies.

One technique which has been the subject of much research with native speakers and is now being used in the classroom with both native and ESL students is sentence combining. It has been found particularly valuable in writing programs because it demonstrates the rules of English sentence structure in a concrete way and permits students to generate their own sentences, immediately putting into practice what they have learned.

WHAT SENTENCE COMBINING IS

Sentence combining is based on the premise that all of our sentences are generated from "deep structures" through a process which is intuitive for native speakers of a language. "Kernel sentences"—basic subject-verb constructions—are such deep structures, and two or more of them can be combined through use of certain procedures (transformations) to produce more sophisticated utterances (or writings) in normal communication.

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For example, the kernel sentences:

A. We saw a film. B. The film was made by Fellini.[1]

may be transformed into:

1. We saw a Fellini film. or
2. We saw a film by Fellini. or
3. We saw a film made by Fellini. or
4. We saw a film which was made by Fellini.

In sentence 1 we have combined sentences A and B by taking the noun *Fellini* from sentence B and placing it in the prenominal position where it can serve an adjectival function. In sentence 2 we deleted all of sentence B except the prepositional phrase which we added to sentence A. In sentence 3 we deleted the noun phrase and auxiliary, leaving a participial phrase to be attached to sentence A. And in the last sentence we substituted a relative pronoun to produce a relative clause. Each sentence may have a different shade of meaning and the choice might depend on context or emphasis or personal "style."

Another possibility for combining sentences A and B is:

5. We saw a film and the film (it) was made by Fellini.

Most native English-speaking adolescents and adults would not produce sentence 5 but many children would (if you substituted *Disney* for *Fellini*) or would make no attempt to combine the sentences. Many ESL students would do the same, even if there are transformations in their native language similar to those used in 1-4.

There have been many studies which demonstrate that the use of subordination (as in sentences 1 through 4) rather than coordination (as in sentence 5) is a characteristic element of "mature" writing. (For a discussion of some of this literature, see "Sentence-Combining as a Curricular Activity: Its Effect on Written Language Development and Reading Comprehension" by Sandra L. Stotsky, in *Research in the Teaching of English,* 9, no. 2 [Spring 1975], 30-71.) Recent studies have pointed out similarities between the processes involved in learning first and second languages.[2]

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[1]This sentence has already undergone a "passive voice transformation" from the kernel, *Fellini made the film.*

[2]For example, see Kellogg Hunt, "Do Sentences in the Second Language Grow Like Those in the First?" *TESOL Quarterly* 4 (September 1970), pp. 195-202; and Susan Ervin Tripp, "Is Second Language Learning Like the First?" *TESOL Quarterly,* 8 (June 1974), pp. 111-127.

John Mellon has defined structures of subordination as grammatical devices by which secondary statements and elaborations, either fully formed or elliptical, are made about the statements in main sentences.[3] Recent research, which includes a review of the literature on language development and the assessment of writing ability, an analysis of "competent" freshman writing, and a survey of college composition texts, identifies nine structures which appear to be indicative of writing maturity and appropriate for teaching to college-level ESL students ready for an intensive writing program.[4] These structures are prenominal adjectives; adverbs; prepositional, participial, gerund, and infinitive phrases; and noun, adverb, and relative clauses. These structures can be effectively taught through sentence combining and can form the basis for a systematic approach to writing development.

Teaching sentence combining to native speakers is primarily a process of making conscious for students what they already know intuitively, if somewhat imperfectly, about their language. But for ESL students it usually means learning something entirely new. Even if similar transformations exist in their native language, ESL students apparently do not use their first language habits in learning the syntax of a new language. They tend to develop learning strategies that recapitulate first language acquisition, but proceed more quickly through similar steps.[5] In my experience, one of the quickest ways to facilitate such development is through demonstration and practice in specific types of sentence combining.

DIAGNOSIS

In the development of any skill, the first step is diagnosis. ESL students who fall into the "intermediate" to "advanced" range will have quite varying abilities in the different language skills. If placement is dependent wholly, or in part, on a multiple choice examination, even one purporting to test structure of "writing ability," many students who

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[3]John C. Mellon, *Transformational Sentence Combining*, NCTE Research Report, no. 10 (Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1969), p. 19.

[4]David M. Davidson, "Assessing Writing Ability of ESL College Freshmen," *Resources in Education*, (July 1977), ED 135247.

[5]Heidi C. Dulay and Marina K. Burt, "Errors and Strategies in Child Second Language Acquisition," *TESOL Quarterly*, 8 (June 1974), pp. 129-136.

are classified as advanced on the basis of reading comprehension or oral skills may be found to have little writing proficiency. There is no substitute for examination of a student's actual writing.

There are several approaches to the assessment of writing. If the purpose of an initial reading is to place students in different levels or sections, or in groups within a section, one may read either "holistically" or with certain criteria in mind. In readings conducted by the College Entrance Examination Board, when screening high school graduates for college placement, papers are compared with one another, with the best and worst of each particular group given the highest and lowest ratings without regard to external or ideal criteria. This is done through quick reading for overall impression by at least three readers who have previously arrived at some understanding of what constitutes a top- or bottom-of-the-scale paper and the various scores in between.

More commonly, readers of ESL placement essays have specific criteria in mind, e.g., subject-verb agreement, control of tenses, ability to handle negative structures, and general complexity of sentence structure—and from these they arrive at course or level placement. The individual instructor can adapt these methods for an initial reading of compositions to determine if students have been appropriately placed or to break up students into major groups for varying emphasis on skills.

A structural analysis of writing can be done in various ways. The simplest is to look for use of particular structures—relative clauses, for example—or for the absence of them where they might appropriately have been used. Consider these examples taken from ESL placement compositions:

A. I know other people, they have a lot of choices like I did.
B. One of my cousins graduated last year from college. He's an accountant for a big insurance company. My cousin name is Jose. Jose is only 27 years old.
C. I know people that has been in college for two or three years and they waste the times of teachers who try to show them the skills in order to live a better life.... Today, people who has been in college they are not able to get a job.

If example A is a typical sample from a composition, it may indicate that the student does not know the use of the relative clause but has the sense that the two clauses he has written belong in the same sentence. The writer of sample B has a lot of information that he might have condensed into one or two sentences with the help of a relative clause (*who graduated last year* or *who is 27 years old*) and other subordinating

structures but apparently does not know how to use them. Sample C illustrates an imperfect use of the relative clause (verb agreement with the relative and failure to delete the pronoun that was substituted for) but was written by a student whose writing is more sophisticated and who appears to need less concentration on that structure. Through this careful kind of reading one can at least partially diagnose the ability of students to handle certain structures.

To assist in the diagnosis of writing ability with particular regard to students' ability to handle structures of subordination, I have developed an instrument called the *Test of Ability to Subordinate* (New York: Language Innovations, Inc., 1977). The test requires students to combine sentences within a given frame by use of particular structures. Employed by individual instructors at several units of CUNY, it has helped focus on students' ability, or lack of it, to perform specific grammatical transformations. The test can be an integral part of the sentence-combining program described here.

USING GROUPS

With proper diagnosis, the instructor can proceed to group students according to ability, thereby allowing them to concentrate their efforts on those structures they do not control. Beyond the first few "lessons," which may be conducted with the entire class in order to demonstrate sentence-combining methods, set the "tone," and establish "rules," sentence combining is best done with students working in teams: pairs or groups of up to five. This method guarantees maximum student participation (if the groups are appropriately constructed), lets more proficient students move at their own pace, and allows the instructor to spend a maximum amount of time with those needing the most help. When students appear to have mastered a particular structure, as demonstrated by performance on class exercises and objective tests, they can move on, keeping their own records of progress as they go.

Some approaches to grouping suggest that students of varying ability be placed together, and this appears to be appropriate in many language-learning activities, where both the more- and less-proficient student can benefit from interacting with each other. In my experience, however, sentence-combining activities do not work as well when people of unequal ability are joined. The less-proficient student tends to remain silent and merely copy what the others have produced while the other students, unless they are unusually generous, quickly grow impatient at being delayed in their progress.

One other point to keep in mind when grouping students for sentence-combining activities is that much of the benefit, as in most language-learning activities, comes through the willingness to take risks—to explore different possibilities and then make choices. It is important that students feel comfortable enough with their teammates—and one way to help ensure this is to group outgoing (not *argumentative*) people separately from those who may have similar abilities but are more reticent.

It is also well to recognize individual learning styles. While group practice with sentence combining works for most students, some prefer to be on their own, having their major interaction with the instructor (or with a computer, as will be discussed later).

MATERIALS

It will come as no surprise to most ESL teachers, especially those working with "new" ESL students, that there are few appropriate sentence-combining materials currently available. As usual, instructors will find it necessary to develop most of their own materials or to adapt what has been published— primarily for native speakers.

Currently, the most accessible and usable text available is *Sentence Combining* by William Strong (Random House, 1973). Designed for native speakers, it presents numerous difficulties for ESL students, especially with its vocabulary, which is highly idiomatic. And although the first half dozen or so selections are relatively easy and concentrate on only a few transformations, the passages quickly become longer and more complicated with no systematic introduction or limitation of structure. The book is a series of passages—descriptive, narrative, and expository—each presented in the form of kernel sentences which students are asked to combine any way they can to form new sentences which make up the complete passage. The book has many strengths: the subject matter is interesting and can often lead to fruitful discussion and further writing; the language is colorful; many of the passages are complete, or near-complete, expository essays that can serve as models for original writing; and it engages students not only in sentence-combining exercises but in extended written discourse, which ultimately is what a writing program is all about. To use the book effectively and methodically, an instructor would have to prepare a considerable amount of introductory material illustrating various structures and then introduce selections as appropriate. Among the better expository pieces in *Sentence Combining* that have worked well

with ESL students are:

In Touch	Television
Consumption	Operation Breadbasket
Things	How Whites Look to Blacks
Pace	Automobiles and Personality
Body Defenses	Air Pollution
Stereotypes	Alcohol and Marijuana
Magic Words	The Black Death

Sentence combining is by no means a new idea, and exercises employing this technique can be found in a number of grammar and composition texts. It is used extensively in Marcella Frank's *Modern English—Exercises for Non-Native Speakers,* Part II (Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972), a workbook companion to her useful grammar reference book. The author uses sentence-combining exercises for practice with adverbial, relative, and noun clauses as well as participial, gerund, and infinitive phrases. Part I of Frank's workbook pair—"Parts of Speech"—offers a variety of exercises other than sentence-combining for practice with adjectives, adverbs, and prepositions. The ESL instructor should find these workbooks useful as *supplementary* texts for students or for reference purposes. The caution to be noted here is that the exercises do not strive for connected discourse but merely offer isolated sentences. Students who use this type of material must be given immediate and continuing opportunity to use the structures in actual writing situations.

A series of workbooks for ESL students by Eugene Hall, published by Simon and Schuster, uses sentence combining for practice in constructing participial, infinitive, and prepositional phrases and adverbial clauses (*Building English Sentences With Verbals,* 1969); participial and infinitive phrases and comparative adjectives and adverbs (*Building English Sentences With Adverbs,* 1971); noun, relative, and adverbial clauses and prenominal adjectives (*Building English Sentences With Two Verbs,* 1969); and noun, relative, and adverbial clauses and participial phrases (*Building Complex English Sentences,* 1971). *Constructing Sentences* by Earl Rand (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969) is made up entirely of sentence-combining exercises from simple coordination through some of the more advanced subordinating structures such as infinitives and gerunds, making it another potentially useful supplementary workbook.

Sentence combining lends itself well to computer assisted instruction. Working within the limitations of whatever computer system is

available, a teacher can construct exercises which students can work on individually, or in pairs, to supplement classroom activities. The computer can be programmed to give instant feedback in the form of clues, suggestions, and examples, or a verbal pat on the head, depending on the student's responses. At Bronx Community College we have three terminals plugged into the College's own DPL-11 computer system and approximately 40 hours of availability to students each week. We have a dozen sentence-combining lessons, focusing on three structures—relative clauses, adverbial clauses, and prepositional phrases. The computer prints out two kernel sentences on a viewing screen and asks the student to combine them by typing in missing words within a given sentence frame. There is a simultaneous paper print-out which students can take with them for review and for discussion with the instructor. (There are more sophisticated computer systems currently in use, among them Control Data's PLATO, which offer exciting possibilities for the teaching of structure.[6]) Since terminal time is limited, we assign a selected group of students to work on sentence-combining exercises, generally those who seem to be less motivated or who don't appear to function well in groups. Students respond positively to this technique. They find the exercises enjoyable and the use of the typewriter keyboard a quickly passing difficulty. As with all other exercises, there is a built-in opportunity to transfer learning into practical use within an extended writing situation. Several of the CAI exercises are composed of 15 or so pairs of sentences which, when combined, form a complete essay. The computer gives the students the homework assignment of writing out the sentences (which they can copy from their print-out) and suggests that they add some ideas of their own to form a complete essay of 150-200 words which they submit to their instructor. (Anyone interested in seeing a demonstration of these materials may contact the author.)

SEQUENCING STRUCTURES

As was pointed out earlier, there are nine major subordinating structures that merit direct attention in an ESL writing program, all lending themselves to a greater or lesser extent to sentence combining. A logical approach to the sequencing of these structures would be their evident ease or sequence of acquisition by ESL students, which apparently reflects the degree of exposure to them in reading materials, as well as inherent qualities of the structures. We may also consider their

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[6]William C. Norris, "Via Technology to a New Era in Education," *Phi Delta Kappan*, 58 (February 1977), pp. 451-453.

frequency of use by native speakers at the "competent" freshman level as a guide to their utility in common expository writing as well as to the ease with which they are handled.

With these guideposts in mind, a logical starting point is the prenominal adjective. In its various forms (primarily descriptive) it appears to be more widely used by native writers than any of the other structures we are considering. It is so commonly found in texts and other material as to be familiar to intermediate and above students, and experience shows it to be relatively easy to grasp, although not without some complicating factors, which will be described below.

Because the adverb usually requires limited manipulation, as in adding *ly* to an adjective and appropriate placement in relation to the verb, it should be considered next. Most difficulty for ESL students is in the use of the derivational suffix and proper placement of adverbs of frequency and manner.

As the second most widely used, and therefore functional, structure, the prepositional phrase might be introduced next. Following mastery of adjective and adverb forms, there would be greater recognition of this structure's function, since it appears primarily as an adverbial of time, place, or manner, or as an adjectival (most commonly descriptive, locative, and generative). Most difficulty here will be encountered with the preposition itself—when it should be used and, especially, which one to use.

Adverbial clauses may be considered next—primarily those of time, cause, and real condition. The main focus for ESL students should be on the use of appropriate conjunctions to combine sentences.

At the college freshman level, the noun clause is used almost exclusively as a verb object, and in this form may be considered for introduction to ESL students at this point in the sequence. Students will have most difficulty with sequence of tenses and transformations from questions.

The relative clause, which should be considered in the latter part of the sequence, presents a number of problems for ESL students as it does for native speakers, most centering around correct use of the relative pronoun and when to delete the original object. This structure will be discussed in more detail later on.

Participial phrases are among the most difficult structures to be considered in our program, and their use might best be limited to adjectival function. Useful comparisons can be drawn between use of

this structure and the relative clause. ESL students will have most difficulty in learning how to use the participial form in place of past and present tenses.

The gerund phrase will be the most difficult structure for ESL students of all those we are considering, and consideration should be limited to its most common use as object of a preposition. The difficulty arises because it requires use of a special form and is specific-verb related; and since it is among the least-used of our structures, ESL students have had little exposure to it.

The infinitive phrase, by contrast, is commonly used and is one of the easiest structures to handle. It is worth considering at this point along with the gerund because it is often used inappropriately in place of that structure, and a comparison of the two structures is helpful for ESL students. The infinitive phrase may be shown in its three functions as verb object, adverbial, and adjectival.

INTRODUCING SENTENCE COMBINING

Generally, working with advanced students, one will find some who have already internalized a few of the transformations under consideration. This means that they will be able to produce them in normal writing situations with little conscious effort. Others will be able to recognize an appropriate structure or form as opposed to a non-English one when they are presented side by side. In introducing sentence combining to a class it is well to use those resources the students bring with them. Formal grammar presentations often do not work well, and unless carefully handled, sentence combining lessons will do no better. An approach more likely to succeed is an inductive one whereby students are led to discover for themselves the way the English language functions.

To begin an introductory lesson, the instructor might take a compound sentence written by one of the students in an earlier composition, break it into its two kernels, and write them on the board. For example:

I called the hotel. They reserved a room for me.

When asked if these sentences can be combined into one, most students will recognize that it can be done with the insertion of the word *and*. Give them two more related kernels:

I'm looking for a job. I can't find one.

all of the students now recognize that the sentences can be joined, and a few may offer the word *but* as an appropriate joiner. Moving on to more advanced structures, the teacher might offer:

Crimes are increasing. The crimes are violent.
Smoking should be illegal. Smoking causes cancer.
I have an uncle. He lives in Puerto Rico.

One may get several answers for each item and in response might ask: "Is this sentence English?" and "Does it have about the same meaning as the two original sentences?" If there is more than one acceptable answer remaining after eliminating the unacceptable responses, the teacher can then ask the students which they prefer and why. In most cases students will be able to determine the answers to the first two questions without help from you, although if there is disagreement the teacher should certainly serve as the authority. It is better to remain non-judgmental about the third question, at this point, encouraging students to make their own "stylistic" choices among acceptable possibilities. Note that students will have quickly learned the general principle of sentence combining without having been given any rules or technical terminology. A few more simple examples done individually will help establish consciously for the students the principle involved. From this point, one can move on to consideration of individual structures as outlined above, grouping students according to their diagnosed needs.

When instructing ESL students in the use of these structures, the teacher must keep in mind that, unlike native speakers, they cannot always rely on their intuitive good sense as to what sounds "right" or "best." But neither should one expect memorization of rules. Rules are important to the ESL student but are internalized better when arrived at inductively and put immediately into practice.

The following are suggestions for instructing students in the use of the prenominal adjective and relative clause which incorporate these principles.

PRENOMINAL ADJECTIVES

Transformational grammarians have identified the prenominal adjective as the product of several possible transformational processes:

(a) Where the adjective has been taken from a post-nominal structure as in the reduction of a relative clause, e.g.,

He looked for the treasure *which had been stolen.*
He looked for the *stolen* treasure.

(b) Where there is the deletion of a related independent clause, or sentence, with a predicate adjective, e.g.,

The rug was stolen. *The rug was Persian.*

The *Persian* rug was stolen.

(c) Where there is the reduction of certain adjectival prepositional phrases, e.g.,

They rented a boat. The boat was *for fishing.*

They rented a *fishing* boat.

(d) Where there is the reduction of certain noun phrases, e.g.,

The doctor looked at the leg. The leg had *an infection.*

The doctor looked at the *infected* leg.

This is a structure that generally presents few problems for native speakers but can offer a number of difficulties for ESL students such as the prenominal positioning of the adjective, the proper sequencing of two adjectives, and the use of correct adjectival and possessive forms.

The first task for the instructor is establishing for the student that in English, adjectives (or "one-word describers") commonly appear before the noun (or "word that they describe"). Students can be helped to arrive at this awareness, and to formulate a "rule" about English grammar, through several methods. A teacher might present them with a number of sentences containing one prenominal descriptive adjective, ask them to identify the "descriptive word" and "word being described," elicit the terms "noun" and "adjective," and help the students come to a conclusion about the relative positioning of the two. One can also offer several pairs of sentences to be combined by a shift of the adjective to prenominal position and then ask them to formulate the rule. If a teacher's philosophy of teaching permits him to offer incorrect structures to students, he might give them sentences with the adjective misplaced and ask, "Which of these sentences are English and which are not?" For an additional means of contrast one might ask students to write similar sentences in their native language and have them point out the differences in word order. All of this is calculated to make the prenominal adjective positioning a conscious one for students.

From here one can offer students sentence-combining exercises fashioned after the transformations illustrated above. Some students will ask for rules governing the sequence of adjectives. Many will need to learn the derivational endings as well as possessive forms. Marcella Frank's workbook (Part I) treats these matters intelligibly and offers excellent exercises. In Strong's *Sentence Combining*, students are given the opportunity to practice the transformation in many of its various forms in some of the earlier (and simpler) selections. In the following

list, * indicates passages that require the transformation from a prepositional phrase and ** indicates selection that require sequencing of two or more prenominal adjectives:

"French Fries"	"In Touch"
"Hamburgers"**	"Wave"* **
"Coffee"	"Main Drag, Saturday Night"* **
"Table"* **	"Just Before the Rain Falls,"**
"Ashtray"**	"Making a Stew"*
"Matchstick"**	

Additional opportunities to use this transformation are provided in many of the more advanced selections (see footnote 6). The prenominal adjective is most easily incorporated into descriptive passages, and students might be asked to write such paragraphs, incorporating as much description as they can before nouns. With this kind of constant practice, students can be helped to use prenominal adjectives appropriately and with excellent effect in more advanced expository pieces.

RELATIVE CLAUSES

Accurate use of the relative clause appears to be among the more sophisticated grammatical processes for native speakers; it is therefore understandable that ESL students will have difficulty with the structure, at least in certain forms. Consider what students must contend with: the relative pronoun changes according to its referent while *that* can be used in most cases; there is a tendency to drop the pronoun when it is an object; the relative has a dual function as connector as well as clause subject or object; and there are complications in the use of *who* and *whom* and in restrictive vs. non-restrictive clauses.

In presenting this structure to ESL students it is better to concentrate on the "basics," starting with appropriate uses of *who, which* and *that* with a minimum of terminology. Once again, an inductive approach is beneficial. Present the students with pairs of sentences to combine. The relative pronouns are so commonly used that at least some students will be able to accomplish this. One can begin with subject (or delayed subject) modification. For example:

> This is the building. It had a fire last week.
> That's the man. He robbed me.
> The man is coming today. He painted the house last month.
> Abraham Lincoln became one of our greatest presidents. He started as a simple country lawyer.
> Racquetball is played indoors. It is becoming very popular.

Also give examples where the pronoun is an object (or can be omitted):

The magazine finally arrived. He subscribed to the magazine.

The man is a specialist. I am going to see him.

There may be acceptable variant responses such as use of a participial phrase or adverbial clause instead of the relative clause, and they should be acknowledged and used for comparison when studying those structures. There will be a number of possible answers to the last item, of which all should be accepted: *who, whom, that,* and omitted pronoun. To quibble with *who* as an object in the pre-verbal position or with *that* in reference to people is to place an unnecessary burden on ESL students.

Based on a number of examples like those illustrated above, one can ask students to generalize about the appropriate use of particular pronouns and when a pronoun can be omitted. Follow up with exercises where the relative modifies an object so that students come to see the variety of possibilities. For more advanced students, one can introduce relatives of time and place as well as the possessive form.

There are useful sentence exercises in Frank's workbook (Part II) and in Hall's *Building Complex English Sentences* and one can then follow up with selections from Strong. Among the earlier passages which employ this structure are: "Hair," "Working Girl," "Pawnbroker," "Things," "Most of Us Remember," "Just Before the Rain Falls," and "American Unfreeway." The structure can be used frequently in many of the expository selections in Strong listed earlier.

If sentence combining is to be an effective way of helping students to improve their control of grammatical structures in writing, the teacher must use the inherent strength of the method: the direct experience of writing good sentences, preferably in extended discourse, and with minimal time lag between insight and application. Sentence combining is not an end in itself, nor is it a method that excludes all others. It is *one* very effective tool to be used within a larger writing program.

Linda Ann Kunz

X-WORD GRAMMAR: OFFSPRING OF SECTOR ANALYSIS

First a confession. I was one of those eighth-grade oddities who loved grammar. I could construct Reed-Kellogg diagrams the way other children made magnificent castles with Erector Sets. I never confused restrictive and non-restrictive clauses, and I had no problems with predicate nominatives and predicate adjectives. Nor did I see any relationship between grammar and writing. I didn't really need to. My parents were native speakers of Standard English, and my schooling was suburban middle class. Formal grammar was more a self-indulgence than a necessary area of study.

Virtually none of my students in fifteen years' teaching have been able to afford such a luxury. Standard English has been their second language, their second dialect or some seemingly unreachable goal. Some have come into my classroom never having written a whole English composition in their lives. My present students, most already out of their teens, feel severely pressed. If they are to study formal grammar at all, it must be immediately applicable to their writing and *show results fast.*

CHOOSING A GRAMMAR

My classroom needs are best met by sector analysis, the system of tagmemic analysis developed by Robert L. Allen of Teachers College, Columbia University, and by its offspring x-word grammar, which may be defined as "the classroom applications of the sector analysis of English to written sentences." More will be said about both of these shortly, but first I should be clear as to what I see as the purposes of studying formal grammar and the criteria a basic writing teacher might apply in choosing a particular grammar.

Consciously or unconsciously, teachers choose to teach grammar for

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purposes of affect, editing, or style. The first of these—having a language look more sensible, more likable through the study of its grammar—is probably not a top priority. I think it is critical. What point is there in teaching grammar if it makes the language look like a rule-infested morass? If this first purpose is overlooked, it is often in favor of the second—editing. *Most* writers for whom Standard English is a second language or dialect and *most* developmental or remedial writers appear to need some systematic framework in which to check the accuracy and acceptability of their written sentences. And, with the exception of "naturally talented writers," whatever and whoever they may be, everyone can use some help with style, particularly the accessible kind of style that derives from varied and balanced use of structures.

With these purposes in mind, we might look briefly at the place most of us started: Latinate, or traditional, grammar. I taught traditional grammar in high school English classes for two years, which was long enough to show me what I didn't need. First of all, only a few students learned the grammar well; more disliked it intensely, and nearly all came to see English as a Gordian knot. Secondly, it simply did not help students with their writing in terms of correctness *or* style. It wasn't me; I taught those rules and diagrams lovingly. It was the grammar. Latinate grammar suits Latinate languages, and English is a Germanic language. It is hard to believe that so important a world language has for centuries been squeezed into a grammar not its own like a prizefighter wearing tutu and toeshoes.

And what of modern grammars? All claim to be *de*scriptive rather than *pre*scriptive, which is an enormous advance right there, yet some are so abstract and theoretical that a teacher dare not take them into the classroom. One of the most thorough discussions of modern grammars from a teacher's point of view is found in Robert L. Allen's *English Grammars and English Grammar*. Each of the major grammars to make its appearance during the past four decades is examined critically, though certainly not without bias: structural linguistics, which had some revolutionary effects upon the study of oral language but did not see written language as more than a secondary visual representation of speech; transformational-generative grammar, which insisted upon language as system instead of language as speech and stayed beyond the reach of classroom teachers (justifiably, I believe) by plunging so deep into the derivations of language that neither the actual utterances nor the practical speech-forming processes of a speaker were described; stratificational grammar, which, unlike other grammars, embraced

semantics from the start but discouraged teachers with its complex strata and diagrams resembling the circuitry of a transistor radio; and tagmemic grammar, which, because it has been scorned or ignored by American linguists as too superficial in approach, has been quite inaccessible to teachers.

None of these modern grammars, even the popular ones, have really caught on—at least not with teachers. Handbook after handbook still comes out with a grammar section starting with the eight parts of speech. I think there are valid, if regrettable, reasons. First, supplanting traditional grammar is like replacing apple pie, however poorly baked, with sacher torte; we know what we grew up with, and we don't give it up so easily. Second, it is as hard for linguistic scholars to make time for deep classroom immersion as it is for teachers to do scholarly research. Much-needed translation of theory into practice is slow in coming. The third reason may not be as obvious as the first two, but it brings us back to where the discussion of purposes for studying grammar began. The open letter at the beginning of my textbook *X-Word Grammar: An Editing Book* reads, "Dear Student . . . The purpose of this book is to have you like the world more." This is not just a nicety; it is a serious intention based on four years' study of the Aesthetic Realism of Eli Siegel and nearly as many years' testing of the proposition that the purpose of all education is to like the world. This is a large concept which cannot be discussed fully here, but I sincerely believe that *no* grammar, whatever its qualities, and *no* grammar teacher, whatever his skills, can affect students in a deep and pleasing way unless there is a relationship made between the form and content of language, students' own lives, and the whole world. Grammar has not yet been seen as kind, but it can be, and I think this will make a great difference in the way students learn it.

Following is a brief list of criteria a Basic Writing teacher might use in choosing a grammar.

1. The grammar should describe modern Standard English—not Latin, not all the languages of the world.
2. It should pertain explicitly to the *written* form of the language.
3. It should take meaning into account.
4. It should be complete and accurate enough to hold up to a linguist's examination but also be translatable to classroom terms and techniques. In other words, there should be a full version for the teacher as well as an abridged, practical version—or at least the possibility of one—for the student.

5. It should be teachable—or better, learnable—through the use of students' intuition, or "ear," for what sounds right or wrong.
6. The student version should minimize terminology, symbols, and abstractions.
7. It should be immediately applicable to students' own sentences.
8. It should yield *some* improvements in student writing very quickly.

SECTOR ANALYSIS AND X-WORD GRAMMAR

The basic assumptions of sector analysis about linguistic analysis in general, the analysis of English in particular, and the value of studying or teaching English grammar are clearly stated in Part Four of *English Grammars and English Grammar*. (1) Written English and spoken English are different but overlapping systems of the English languge, each with its own conventions or "rules." (2) If a new grammar of English is to have any real value for the teacher, it must be teachable even to elementary school students and to those who may not already have had any formal study of traditional grammar. (3) A grammar having any relevance for the teaching of reading and writing must emphasize not words but constructions—the larger syntactic units that combine in different ways to make up an infinite number of sentences. (4) The grammar must deal with specific kinds of directed relationships—that is, not just relationships *between* two or more elements but *to* something else. For example, in the sentence *Percy put the hat on the table in the hall*, it is not enough to say that *on* and *in* are prepositions introducing phrases; it must be pointed out that *in* introduces the smaller phrase *in the hall* while *on* introduces the larger phrase *on the table in the hall*, which has the smaller phrase embedded in it. (5) The grammar must allow for differing interpretations of potentially ambiguous sentences like *My brother wrote a poem on Thanksgiving Day*. (6) English sentences have one basic, overall order of positions on each layer of analysis, and all native speakers of the language share a feeling for these basic sequences whether the positions are filled or unfilled in any real sentence. (7) Finally, meaning is an integral part of language and thus cannot be ignored, and the best descriptions of language will usually proceed from forms (which are overt) to meanings (which are covert), rather than from meanings to forms although the former may often guide one to the recognition of the latter.

The last of the assumptions above identifies sector analysis as a tagmemic grammar. A tagmeme is a form-function correlation which

signals meaning only in context, never in isolation. The word *record*, for example, cannot even be pronounced without diacritical marks until it is put into a context: *A record is kept by a person whose job it is to record.* The form in each occurrence of *record* is simply a single word; the functions of the two are different, however. Thus the form-function correlation NOUN: *record* signals a different meaning from VERB: *record.*

Although the example above deals with an individual word, the most attractive linguistic feature of sector analysis is that it takes on large chunks of language right from the outset. The analysis of real sentences does not string out a lot of individual words, nor does it "start from the bottom and build up" from any kind of a kernel or model. On the contrary, it starts right from the top and peels a sentence down layer by layer stripping away one or more construction-types-within-positions after another until the level of individual words is reached. For example, the sentence *Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their party* represents one particular form, or construction type, in one particular position, or sector. The construction type is a *trunk* (or independent clause), and it is found in the only position it can fill, which is called the trunk position. There are empty positions as well, which could be filled by such things as *whether we like it or not, gentlemen, unfortunately* and other construction types. The first level or layer of analysis, then, is simply "trunk in trunk position." On the next level down, we look at the positions in the construction type "trunk" to see what new construction types fill them. The two positions available are subject and predicate. One is filled by the single word *now*, and the other by a larger construction type, the predicate *is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their party.* Down another level, we look at the two positions in the predicate to find that the x-word position is filled by the x-word *is* while the predicatid position is filled by a predicatid (which means "everything left over in the trunk once the x-word is cut off"). One more level. The predicatid has positions available for a verb, an object, and various types of complements. In our sample sentence only a complement position is filled, and it is filled by a construction type called a cluster. This cluster, *the time for all good men to come to the aid of their party,* like any other cluster, could be put into other positions besides complement—subject and object being the most obvious ones.

In a teacher's study of sector analysis, much time is devoted to the kind of "layering down" described above. There are fewer than ten construction types and only fixed, predictable positions in each of them, so the basic analytic techniques do not take long to acquire. Nevertheless, these are definitely techniques for the teacher's

examination of English, not the basic writing student's. This is where x-word grammar or some other student version of sector analysis is necessary. At some points the two are the same; at others they appear to be more different than they actually are. I do not think that x-word grammar actually contradicts sector analysis, but it should be kept in mind that there is always a "whatever-works-in-the-classroom" factor operating as x-word grammar develops further, so there are bound to be areas which are less comprehensive, less sound linguistically while at the same time more practical than corresponding areas of the parent grammar. Above all, x-word grammar should not be taken as a mini-version of sector analysis as a linguistic system; its purposes are different, and it should be judged according to pedagogical rather than linguistic criteria.

X-words are the twenty first auxiliary verbs of English. They are the only words which can start the actual question part of a yes-no question, and they are found in every written statement or question. If you can think of a statement which doesn't appear to have an x-word, turn it into a yes-no question or a negative statement, and the x-word will show itself. In fact, if you would like to start an examination of x-word grammar exactly as many students do, make a list of twenty questions that can be answered 'yes' or 'no.' Start each question with a different word, but do not repeat any of these words in their negative forms, and do not use the obsolete (or obsolescent) x-words *ought, dare* and *need.*

The x-words are a beautiful starter and focal point in the grammar, first because they are ubiquitous in English and form a unique and very tidy category, second because students already know them although they have never looked at them as a category, and third because many Basic Writing students' problems show up right around the x-word positions: subject-verb agreement, negation, word order, tense, missing or repeated subjects, verb forms and certain kinds of fragments. X-words, like a number of other categories of function words, need never be defined for students; they are simply part of a closed list of twenty items. Four of them—*is, was, has, does*—are used with the third-person singular which has given many students such headaches, and these four conveniently end in the letter *-s*. None of the other sixteen x-words do. Each x-word dictates, without exception, the form of any verb following it. The only five x-words that offer any choice of verb form are *am, is, are, was* and *were*, and this very limited choice represents the important difference between active and passive voice, for example *is eating* versus *is eaten.* All contractions except purely literary ones have an x-word as one of their components. The term "subject" is defined simply as "the

position between the two x-word positions," which is easy to find just by making a yes-no question because the x-word moves from the right of the subject to the left. Every x-word has a subject which it must agree with. Verbs, on the other hand, lose most of their grammatical meaning once their x-words are removed; they indicate neither number nor person nor tense without their x-words.

Prodigies though they are, the x-words are not all there is to x-word grammar. The grammar focuses on five basic editing skills: (1) making yes-no questions (to check basic sentence structure), (2) identifying sentence patterns (to check sentence variety and punctuation), (3) matching subject/x-word/referent (i.e. matching four singular x-words and four plural x-words with their subjects and the pronouns that refer to them), (4) matching x-words and verb forms, and (5) matching tenses and time signals. A teacher using x-word grammar conscientiously can expect marked changes in students' free writing. The first improvement is in basic sentence structure: fragments disappear almost immediately, run-on sentences (also called comma splices) take only a little longer, and sentence variety increases from the first work on basic sentence patterns. Punctuation begins to improve at about the same time because all of the basic punctuation rules of x-word grammar—there are only eight—derive from sentence structure. Subject-verb agreement and the related area of referent agreement improve slowly but steadily. Work on verb forms and verb tenses seldom shows automatic or immediate results but provides a base for patient and eventually result-producing practice.

Perhaps the most colorful and enjoyable area of x-word grammar is basic sentence patterns. Sector analysis posits one basic pattern in which the major positions, or sectors, are filled or left vacant to form real sentences, whereas x-word grammar uses seven basic patterns to represent the core structure of students' expository writing. These seven patterns can be compared to the digits zero through nine in that they can be combined to form an infinite variety of real sentences.

TRUNK	*Bluebeard had many wives.*
LINKER AND TRUNK	*However, he never found marital bliss.*
FRONT SHIFTER AND TRUNK	*Though Bluebeard had many wives, he never found marital bliss.*
TRUNK AND END SHIFTER	*Bluebeard never found marital bliss though he had many wives.*

TRUNK + TRUNK	*Bluebeard had many wives, but he never found marital bliss.*
TRUNK WITH TWO PARTS	*Bluebeard had many wives but never found marital bliss.*
TRUNK WITH INSERT	*Bluebeard, who had many wives, never found marital bliss.*

Only seven construction types come into heavy use in x-word grammar:

1. Clause	*though Bluebeard had many wives*
2. Trunk	*Bluebeard had many wives/he never found marital bliss*
3. Predicate	*had many wives/never found marital bliss*
4. Predicatid	*have many wives/having many many wives/never finding marital bliss*
5. Phrase	*in his life/on time/at 10:00/never finding bliss*
6. Cluster	*his life/many wives/a son/ each week*
7. Word	*life/wives/bliss/week/have/be/ his/many/a/one/of/the*

Eight punctuation rules suffice for students' expository essays, and most of these rules can be expressed in terms of the sentence patterns themselves.

1. LIST Use commas in a list of three or more items.
2. FT Use a comma at the end of a front shifter with a verb or x-word in it.
3. T+T Use a comma before the joiner between two whole trunks.
4. TI Use commas on both sides of an insert.*
5. LT Use a comma after a linker like *However, Therefore, Nevertheless.*

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*Only what traditional grammar calls "non-restrictive clauses" are among the many things which can fill an insert position in sector analysis. "Restrictive clauses" are always necessary identifying information and are therefore embedded into larger constructions. My students have had little difficulty seeing that a sentence like "Women who talk too much annoy me," which is only a TRUNK, can change in meaning—and offensiveness—by the use of a pair of commas to mean TRUNK WITH INSERT, i.e. "All women annoy me," and the extra information is that all women talk too much.

6. "Q" Use a comma to start and end a quotation.

7. T;T Use a semi-colon instead of a joiner between two whole trunks.

8. T: Be sure you have a whole trunk before you use a colon to signal a list or an explanation coming up.

X-word grammar recognizes three forms of any verb—the base form, the *-ing* form and the participle (e.g. *EAT, eating, eaten*)—but acknowledges four other forms that combine a base form with another word: *to* + base form = infinitive (e.g. *to EAT*) and *do, does* or *did* + base form = *do*-form, *does*-form or *did*-form (e.g. *eat, eats, ate*). Tenses are either past or non-past and are called by names of the x-words they use: the *did* tense, the *was/were* tense, the *had* tense, the *do/does* tense, the *am/is/are* tense and the *have/has* tense. The future tense is an exception since it uses various x-words, and the systematic patterning of x-words found in what traditional grammar calls conditional tenses comes under the rubric of future, general and past *if* tenses.

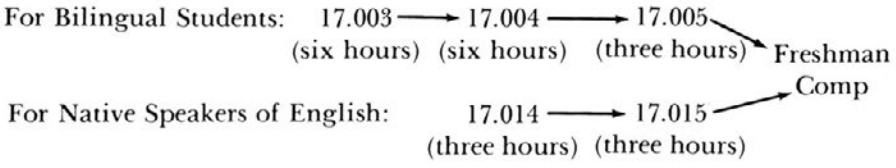
Most of the terminology of x-word grammar has already appeared in the brief summary above. Most of the terms are shorter and more visually or functionally descriptive than their traditional grammar counterparts. And there are simply fewer of them in the first place. There are fewer definitions of terms because many items, like x-words, joiners, includers, prepositions, and linkers, make up closed lists which are part of students' reference materials and because others, like nouns, verbs, and adjectives, are defined only in context according to their form-function correlations.

X-word grammar has no theoretical underpinnings of its own but generally goes along with the assumptions and assertions of the parent grammar, sector analysis. It has not been tested systematically but has instead developed and expanded gradually through daily classroom application, feedback, and revision, as well as a considerable amount of teacher exchange and criticism, mainly in adult manpower programs and colleges in the New York metropolitan area. Scholarly criticism is of course desirable, but until it is offered, teachers should trust their students and themselves as critics.

CLASSROOM APPLICATIONS

Sector analysis was adopted by the Hunter College Developmental English Program in 1972, and the experimental edition of Allen, Pompian and Allen's *Working Sentences*, the first college text of the grammar, was tested and revised in this setting.

The Developmental English Program has five writing courses leading to Freshman Composition.



The "four" level (17.004 and 17.014) has the heaviest dose of grammar. Both native English speakers and bilingual students use the revised edition of *Working Sentences* as their core text. The next level up uses the experimental edition of *X-Word Grammar* and, as much as is possible, limits grammar to brush-up editing techniques.

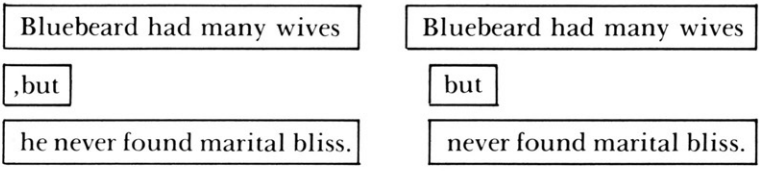
Teachers' approaches to the grammar vary considerably, but all are working toward a two-hour essay final examination which is read by two or more readers using a single, standardized score sheet. At all levels there is a heavy emphasis on grammatical correctness.

At the "four" level I use additional materials to supplement *Working Sentences*. Approximately one-sixth of my students' in-class time is spent working on a set of materials called *The Grammar Discovery Tasks*, which is a box of 160 four-by-six cards comprising twenty-four tasks designed to have students use their knowledge of, and intuition about, English to establish categories, formulate principles, and apply both to samples of their own writing. Using these tasks, students work in groups of four, pooling their resources to examine some basic features of English: the twenty x-words and hidden x-words, the seven basic sentence patterns, simple punctuation rules, how noun signals work with countable and uncountable nouns, how eight x-words agree with their subjects, how families of x-words determine the form of following verbs, how x-words carry time meaning and match particular time signals.

When students begin to use these tasks, they form a group of four and choose a reader-recorder to take Task #1 from the box, read it to the group, and write down what the group comes up with. Task #1, which asks students to come up with the twenty x-words in yes-no questions and negative statements, would be a slow task for one person; the combined suggestions and checking of four students generally results in a correctly completed task in twenty minutes to half an hour. This is true of most of the tasks that call upon all four members of the group to work together. Every third task, however, is an individual, written

follow-up to the two tasks preceding and is checked by another member of the group. Thus the working arrangements are small group, paired *and* individual.

The other main supplementary materials I use are the Cuisenaire rods, or Algebricks, more familiarly associated with the teaching of modern math and Silent Way oral language. These rods were first used to teach grammar by the English as a Second Language staff of Borough of Manhattan Community College. For their purposes the rods represent sentence positions; for mine they represent construction types, and their configurations represent filled positions. TRUNK + TRUNK (T+T) and TRUNK WITH TWO PARTS (T=) look like this:



Students have their own bags of rods and can experiment with various combinations of the sentence patterns and construction types. In a way they are diagramming sentences but without ever putting pen to paper except to record sentences themselves. Although the "peeling down" of sentence layers has not proven necessary in a basic writing class, it *can* be done with rods alone. A reading teacher more interested than I in the levels at which particular structures were embedded once peeled a complex sentence down to its seventeenth layer in a blaze of colored sticks!

In addition to classroom applications, x-word grammar editing techniques are valuable in tutoring and student conferences. Often much teacher or tutor time is spent in explaining errors and rules. If, instead, the student is asked to *do* something to find and correct his errors, the teacher or tutor can look on in silence unless a problem arises. For example, there is no need to explain fragments; most of the common explanations are inaccurate anyway. If a student is still writing fragments after he has learned the x-words and basic sentence patterns, the teacher or tutor can assume that he simply has not yet tried the yes-no question technique. This happens frequently because the technique seems too simple for what the student's notion of grammar is. If a student tries it under supervision, however, he may leave the conference or tutoring session surprised but gratified at the extent to which he can edit a particular problem entirely on his own.

Over twelve years I have met a mixture of relief, surprise, and gratification among students as they discover (1) that English makes sense, (2) that many rules do not have exceptions, (3) that they can use their own intuition to figure things out without being told, (4) that they can apply the grammar immediately to their own sentences, and (5) that many basic problems can be solved fairly quickly and painlessly. Until controlled experimentation and scholarly back-up come along, this is sufficient justification for me to use x-word grammar.

GRAMMAR IN ITS PLACE

If I had my wish as regards the place of grammar in the curriculum, I would have elementary school children learn a certain amount of x-word grammar, not for editing but for gradually expanding their power to manipulate larger and increasingly complicated "chunks" of the written language. High school students might look at some of the conventions and requirements of formal English writing, and, particularly if Standard English is their second dialect or second language, learn a handful of editing techniques. College students or high school students who do not need editing techniques might study grammar only as it relates to style. For example, it would be a pleasure to *start out* the grammar work of a college-level writing course with "super-sentences" (called "one-and-a-half-sentences" in sector analysis), which asks students to take five little trunks, cut them in half, discard all but one subject and one x-word, and put everything together using *no* joiners (*and, but, so, or*) and *no* includers (*when, because although,* etc.).

> *The average American housewife is bored.*
> *She doesn't have enough to do.*
> *She will soon set out in search of a job.*
> *She will leave her over-indulged family.*
> *They will stare at a pile of dirty dishes.*
>
> *Bored at not having enough to do, the average American housewife will soon set out in search of a job leaving her over-indulged family staring at a pile of dirty dishes.*

Or if a student prefers inserts in the middle of the trunk and fewer-*ing* forms:

> *The average American housewife, bored at not having enough to do, will soon set out in search of a job leaving her over-indulged family to stare at a pile of dirty dishes.*

Some grammar might also turn up in reading courses. For example, if students were expected to distinguish between topics and main ideas, they could rely on the familiar yes-no question technique because topics, including most titles, do not turn into yes-no questions while main ideas, which are statements *about* a topic, do. Reading comprehension would, to a large extent, consist of digging out meaning from where it is buried in the various sentence levels or layers.

This admittedly ideal spectrum of grammar use points up one of the present disadvantages of sector analysis and x-word grammar. They simply are not widely known. Almost all students meet one or the other for the first time when they are already teenagers or adults, and usually they have learned some traditional grammar even if only fuzzily. Traditions die hard. I find myself slowly but steadily changing from a hardsell zealot to an even more committed but hopefully less offensive softsell advocate of sector analysis and x-word grammar. The change in style is more respectful of what students, teachers and tutors already know; I am no longer yearning for grammatical cataclysm.

One other cautionary word is in order. Although English as a second language teachers disagree quite widely on this matter, there seems to be some justification to avoiding the use of sector analysis or x-word grammar with beginning and intermediate English learners. Such things as basic sentence patterns are, from a certain point of view, *too* easy to pick up, and it is distressing to read a composition that substitutes clever structural arrangements for idiomatic English. For example . . .

> Some student has difficulty to learn english, and neither do I. However, when I will dominate english, my good teacher will be that who I will thank. Being an important part of the education, people has a right to know the following: x-word, hidden x-word and basics sentence patterns.

If a grammar is as good as it is cracked up to be, it should have a less, not more, prominent place in a given course. I am happiest with its place in my "five" level course, the one just before Freshman Composition. We start with the assumption that writing is first of all thoughts put on paper and do a lot of thinking, talking, drafting, reading back, and drafting some more. Gradually we work on overall organization, paragraph development, sentence-level variety and economy, vocabulary and style, and finally the fine points: editing grammar, mechanics, and other writing conventions. I feel I can afford to hold off on grammar while bigger things are being worked on

because the grammar I use is efficient, economical, and relatively easy for most students to learn.

SUGGESTIONS TO INTERESTED TEACHERS

The following texts and materials concerning sector analysis or x-word grammar are available.

Allen, Robert L., Rita Pompian, and Doris Allen. *Working Sentences.* New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1975. (165 p.) $4.95.

Allen, Robert L. *English Grammars and English Grammar.* New York: Scribners & Sons, 1972. (apparently being reprinted now).

Kunz, Linda Ann. *Grammar Discovery Tasks* (experimental edition). New York: Language Innovations, Inc., 1976. $5.00.

_____. *X-Word Grammar: An Editing Book* (experimental edition). New York: Language Innovations, Inc., 1976. (99 p.) $2.00 for each student text and answer book.

_____. *A Sampling of X-Word Grammar.* (unpublished teachers' handout available free from Language Innovations, Inc.).

Schwartz, Mona and Colette Spinelli. *Writing: A Discovery Approach.* Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1976. (246 p.) $8.50.

Although Sector Analysis for teachers is offered only at Teachers College, Columbia University, there are more and more workshop and conference presentations every year. The Rutgers Spring Writing Teachers' Workshop has featured x-word grammar two years' running. Members of Language Innovations, Inc. have done workshops for the City University of New York, the School of International Training in Vermont, the Welfare Education Plan, and state and national conventions. A mini-course in x-word grammar for teachers in the New York metropolitan area is being planned for the fall.

Barbara Quint Gray
and Alice Trillin

ANIMATING GRAMMAR: PRINCIPLES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF VIDEO-TAPE MATERIALS

In September of 1975, we joined with three friends and colleagues in the English Department of The City College of New York to work on developing video-taped curricular materials. Our group had been organized in response to a hope that the use of video tape could alleviate the staggering teaching burden that the admission of great numbers of underprepared students had placed on our department and on English Departments in the entire City University.

The thought that audio-visual materials might provide assistance in such work alternately allured and offended us. But, we had a mandate from the City University, some funding from its Chancellor, and a promise to produce whatever we wrote from The New York Network, an affiliate of The State University, so we agreed to consider the possibility. What follows is the story of our slow conversion to a cautious belief in the potential of video tape for teaching and a consideration of the most instructive lessons we learned along the way, lessons we feel may be critical to the development of pedagogically sound and useful video materials.

The most experienced producers of educational technology have complained about the reluctance of teachers, particularly of English teachers, to use anything that is connected to a machine. They imagine us as stubborn, closed-minded, and probably clumsy—inhibited by our inability to thread a film on a projector or insert a cassette into a tape recorder. It may be true that teachers whose subject is the spoken and written word are reluctant to turn their classes over to an electronic device, and it may even be true that we are particularly clumsy as a group, but we suspected that at the heart of the teacher's reluctance to use technology has been the poor quality of the material that technology has presented. Generally, audio-visual instructional material has not

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met the demands of its student audience, which has watched enormous amounts of commercial TV and has sophisticated expectations of what material on a video screen should look like. Much of the amateur video material, perhaps filmed by an untrained photographer with a hand-held camera or a stationary tripod, using homemade settings and amateur actors, has proved to be painfully non-visual when compared, as it inevitably is, with even the most conventional televised dramatizations. Or, if the form of the video offering has been slick enough to please the audience, with perhaps some professional animation or catchy color film techniques, then the content has often been uninspiring. For instance, the most conventional of material, available in many standard grammar handbooks, might be read aloud in a calmly professional voice, apparently on the theory that people who are unskilled readers should be able to learn more successfully from a talking handbook than from a printed one. We theorized that it may not have been the notion of technological assistance that teachers resisted, but the poorly conceived, poorly written products technology has offered.

When our group began to investigate video techniques, therefore, we decided that we would not limit ourselves to looking at materials specifically designed to be "educational." We were interested in what the medium of video *could* do, not in what it *had* done. We were already familiar with the educational materials being used around the country, since we had screened many of these at the Writing Lab at City College and at the CUNY Instructional Resource Center. We arranged with Channel 13, New York's educational television network, to look at a large selection of animated films from its library—animation that ranged from the dancing clay morsels and fluid sand pictures of Eliot Noyes Jr. to the cool numerical games played by the Charles Eames lab in films made for IBM. We went to Soho and to the Museum of Modern Art to look at what was being done by the best of the new film makers and animators. We talked to graphic artists, to designers of commercials, to TV producers, to anyone we could find who had done exciting things with words and images moving across the screen. We were really not quite sure what we were looking for, but in retrospect it seems that we were searching for techniques that would justify using technology for teaching, that would accomplish something that a conventional teacher, even with great expertise, could not accomplish, that a conventional textbook presentation, no matter how enticingly presented, could not reveal. The greatest value of this search was not in any concrete models that we found—there really weren't any models for

what we wanted to do—but in the expansion of our visions of the possibilities that video offered. Later, we would deal with the practical realities of what we *could* do, of what we could afford.

There was one piece of film that came closer than anything else we saw to providing a model for what we would eventually do, and that was a one-minute film done by the Charles Eames lab for IBM. The film attempted to clarify a principle in algebra, a subject unfamiliar to all five of us. It made its point by rapidly substituting numbers in an equation, with no voice-over explanation of what was going on. At the end of these beautifully animated number substitutions accompanied by music, we all felt that we had had a learning experience. That is, by having to concentrate on the movement of numbers on the screen, by having no explanation of what was going on, and by seeing, because of repetitions and substitutions, a pattern evolving in the sequence we watched, we had inductively grasped the principle being "taught." Of course, the learning took place out of context, and we couldn't relate it to anything else we knew. But there was no question that learning had taken place, and that it had happened in a new and exciting way.

It was perhaps our strongly positive reaction to the Eames film and our strongly negative reaction to so much of the conventional material that we had seen that led us to develop some of the principles on which all of our later work was based. As we began to meet regularly, we did two things: 1) we developed an outline of the sequence of material that we would cover in our video "courses"; and 2) we began to make "rules" for ourselves about how we should and should not use the medium. The evolution of the "rules" was much less systematic than the development of the syllabus. We didn't even know that we had developed rules, in fact, until we found ourselves applying them. But they did develop, and it might be useful to list them here:

Rule #1.

> Use the screen to produce "illuminations," insights that are hard to get from the printed page. Never put anything on the screen that could be taught just as well in a book. (This rule caused us to focus on word animation on the screen—words can't move around on the printed page.)

Rule #2.

> Use the screen to evoke the students' own intuitions about language. Never explain anything until after the student has had a chance to grasp it intuitively from the screen. Once the intuition is evoked, it is all right to explain, but voice-over

explanations should be held until the end of a video section, and be kept to a minimum.

Rule #3.

Always proceed inductively on the tapes, presenting pieces of information, but not necessarily providing the whole picture until the student has worked through the parts and can perceive "answers" on his own. (Thus, for example, in Unit I a student will watch sentence kernel expansion and then reduction of the expanded sentence back down to the kernel before he is ever told that at the heart of every sentence is a sentence kernel that can be expanded almost endlessly. By the time that information is spoken, the student will already be conscious of it even if he may not have phrased it quite the same way.)

Rule #4.

Combat student passivity by constantly stopping the tape and having the student do exercises that make him use the insights he has just gained from the tape. The tapes provide patterns for doing things with sentences, but the patterns are useless unless the student can employ them himself.

Rule #5.

The main goal of the material on the screen should never be:

a) to entertain
b) to present direct instruction that could be done in a book.

There might be parts of a tape that either entertain or present direct instruction, but these segments should always be kept at a minimum and be secondary to the main function of the tapes, which is to illuminate principles.

The pedagogical guidelines on which the tapes are based were somewhat easier to come by. It was surprising to us how often we found that we agreed about what we wanted to teach, despite differing notions of how the teaching might be accomplished. Our decision to work in a group had been based on the fact that there was just too much work for any one person to do, and on the fact that we wanted a chance to solidify some of the ideas that we all had been developing at City College over the past years. More important, the decision grew from our sense that as

co-workers we could act as sounding boards for one another, thereby providing a greater refinement of our scripts and a wider applicability of our products than would be possible if we were to work independently.

The decision could have been a disastrous one—groups are notorious for procrastinating as well as arguing—but, for reasons we still don't completely understand, the group method worked better than we had even hoped. (We have since found out that the outstanding curriculum produced by the Open University in Britain was all developed by teams consisting of from four to thirty people.)

The chemistry of a group is complicated. We had all taught together for a number of years. We had often talked about teaching methodologies and language theories, both on an *ad hoc* basis and in cooperative teaching experiences and departmental meetings. Two of us had degrees in linguistics, and the rest had read widely in the field. We were all interested in the practical applications of linguistic theory, and dissatisfied with the options that traditional descriptive and prescriptive grammars offered. They provided a vocabulary of grammatical terminology to be memorized without presenting pragmatic insights into the actual power of the phenomena they identified or, worse, focused on teaching "errors," the comma splice one week, the fragment the next. Research had shown that there was very little carry-over from the learning of grammatical rules to the application of these rules in writing. Somehow, most grammar books seemed to have gotten things backward, beginning with error and later moving on to an understanding of the sentence. We had all experimented in class with strategies that would help students gain control of the sentence, with ways to get them to expand sentences, to combine and de-combine them, using the methods suggested by the sentence-combining work of John Mellon and Frank O'Hare. This linguistic approach to grammar seemed to lend itself particularly well to video—we had all often wished that we could illustrate combinations by making words move around the blackboard in the way they could move around a screen. We all agreed that the most important activity for students in an English class is writing, but we agreed that the most effective methods of generating what we think of as free writing cannot be done as effectively on a screen as in a classroom with a teacher and other students. We would, therefore, leave pre-writing exercises and editing and a wide range of other techniques out of our video course and concentrate on what we thought the medium might be able to do best—teach students as much as we could about the way the sentence works.

The set of pedagogical guidelines that evolved can be summarized briefly:

1) We would cover only one part of this course in our video material—that which related to sentence structure. This would include, indirectly, attention to error, since the student's ability to identify error would presumably increase with his increased ability to understand the sentence, but supplementary materials on specific errors such as subject-verb agreement and verb tense, would be necessary. We would not attempt to deal with "free" writing, assuming that teachers would have their own strategies for this part of the course. Our material, however, would relate to "free" writing, because the controlled exercises in writing sentences could be related to less controlled writing experiences, and the student's growing awareness of syntactic choices would eventually lead to a greater awareness of differences in literary styles. This awareness of style would be useful in the reading done in the course, as well as the writing.

2) To produce the insights about language we hoped to achieve, we would rely heavily, though not solely, on sentence combining.

3) We would lead the students from an intuitive understanding of how the language works to an ability to analyze sentences systematically. In this we differed from sentence combining texts such as William Strong's *Sentence Combining*, which rely only on students' intuition. Although we agreed with Frank O'Hare that there was little to be gained from teaching transformational or any other grammar in isolation, we felt that adult students such as ours would benefit from doing some fairly rigorous analysis of the sentences they were producing. However, we felt that we must first give them the confidence that they could in fact produce complex sentence structures. After they had done this, after they had "played" with sentences for three or four weeks, they would be ready to examine analytically what they had been doing intuitively.

4) Our goal in everything we taught would be twofold. We wanted to help students:

   a. Gain greater syntactic fluency, to be able to control the structures that they used. The goal was not necessarily to write long sentences, but to develop a wide range of options for the sentences they wrote.

b. Use their insights about the sentence to correct errors in their writing.

After agreeing on these pedagogical guidelines, we were able to outline the sequence of scripts that we would produce. We decided that each script should represent one week's work, and would take up about fifteen minutes of video time. (The rest of the hour would be left for workbook activities.) The sequence evolved naturally from the pedagogical guidelines we had outlined and from strategies we had been using in our classrooms. The first three weeks would be spent calling on the students' intuitions to show them that they actually knew a good deal about language, and to raise questions in their minds that would be answered as the tapes progressed. We planned the first unit, an introduction to the sentence, to function as an overview of all that we would hope to illustrate and analyze in subsequent units. Thus, it began with the fundamental notion that any group of words that can be called a sentence is divisible into two parts, which we called the subject part and the verb part in order to be as simple and non-grammatical as possible. Students would watch sentences divide according to that principle, then try in the workbook to make divisions themselves on the basis of what they thought had happened on the screen. In doing this, they would find out that what may have seemed to be a simple process was in fact a difficult one, requiring a great deal of information about the way a sentence was put together, but they would be reassured in the workbook that in the next weeks of the course they would gradually acquire this information. In the second half of Unit I they would be introduced to the idea that at the heart of every sentence is a sentence kernel, and that the kernel can be expanded almost endlessly through the use of a limited set of basic modification structures, so far unnamed. Finally, the unit concluded that anything that could be attached to a sentence could also be detached, down to the unmodified kernel, while the sentence still remained a sentence. This approach eschewed the traditional notion that a sentence expressed a complete thought in favor of what we considered to be a more pragmatic definition. It remained for us to explore the kernel and the modification process, first inductively, then analytically.

In planning Unit II, we struggled to find an accurate and quantifiable way of explaining to students what constitutes a minimal sentence, or kernel. We finally came to support Paul Roberts' position that the concept of "sentenceness" is so fundamental to a mature speaker's use of language that "if you do not already know what an English sentence is,

you will when you have studied sentence patterns."[1] Thus we simply decided to present unexpanded sentence patterns to students in Unit II, with the confidence that reinforcement of patterns would raise consciousness about phenomena that were, in mature speakers, deeply ingrained.

In outlining Units I and II, then, we had established our basic principle, that a sentence consists of a kernel and whatever is attached to it. In Unit III, we proposed to introduce procedures for sentence combining by actually combining a number of kernels into an expanded sentence on the screen. Starting with a list of unmodified kernels carefully selected to yield a full range of modification structures, we would focus on them one at a time, deleting parts of them that repeated the base sentence, adding or changing any necessary elements to produce modifiers and then literally floating them into their appropriate new positions in an expanding sentence.

After asking students to experiment with the combining process by recombining their own sentences in the workbook, we would finally be ready to build on the intuitions about sentence structure aroused during the first three weeks in the course and to begin analyzing the ways in which modification can be attached to a kernel. So, in Unit IV, we would take the major groups of function words and word endings that create problems in student syntax—relative pronouns, participial phrases, markers, and subordinating and coordinating conjunctions—and after illustrating the general function of such words and endings to establish structure rather than meaning in sentences, we would look at each group individually to see how it could be generated from independent sentences. So, for instance, the initial kernels

The people left early.
The people came late.

could be combined on the screen to produce the expanded sentence

The people who came late left early.

by deleting the repeated words in the second sentence ("The people"), substituting the relative pronoun *who*, and moving the resultant relative clause to a position following "The people" in the top sentence. All this would happen to numerous pairs of sentences on the screen without verbal explanation, allowing students to see directly where such structures come from and what they consist of. The same procedure would be applied to show the derivation of present and past participial modifiers from sentences containing verbs in the continuous tenses or

[1]Paul Roberts, *Patterns of English*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1956), p. 58.

the passive voice. Finally, the movement of words on the screen would lead students to explore the ability of both subordinating and coordinating conjunctions to unite sentence elements or full sentences. At the same time, different combinations forming on the screen would lead students to consider variations in meaning created by different coordinators.

Having established a conscious awareness, then, of the sources and workings of many function words,[2] we were ready to proceed to Unit V, which would consider the positions that different modification structures can take in sentences. This unit would rely on the subject part-verb part distinction established in Unit I and look at modifiers in their relationships to one or the other half of the sentence. It would establish the most normal positions for specific modification structures to take—adjectives preceding the nouns they modified, subordinate clauses following verbs—and assess as well the power that different structures have to move out of those normative positions and occupy others, adjectives, for example, shifting to the position following the noun or subordinate clauses moving to the front of a sentence.

Our last analytical unit, Unit VI, would focus on nominalizations, advanced structures that many students have no intuitive access to because they are rare in ordinary speech. Yet, because noun clauses are characteristic of mature and literate writing and because one kind of nominalized structure, the indirect question, is a subtle source of error in the writing of non-standard English speakers, we felt that no course in sentence analysis could be complete without consideration of those structures. Our tape would follow the now firmly established pattern: it would combine kernel sentences, highlighting as it did so the changes that are required to transform an independent sentence into a nominalized structure. It would explore six ways of creating a noun clause from a sentence, so that to combine the kernels

Something startled us.
Dan arrived.

the second kernel was altered in the following ways to make it replace "something:"

That Dan arrived Dan's arriving Dan's arrival For Dan to arrive [It . . . . .] [It . . . . .]	startled us	[that Dan arrived.] [for Dan to arrive.]

[2]Articles were eliminated from consideration since they create little trouble for our target population of native or fluent English speakers.

Changes were introduced one at a time or, in indirect questions, cumulatively, by first providing kernels that required only one change to nominalize them, then providing ones that required several or all the possible changes. Thus, finally, in combining the kernels

> I asked John something.
> Are you coming?

to yield

> I asked John if he was coming.

the student would watch the question change in the following ways before it could replace "something": adding "if" or "whether" since the question contained no question word, restoring statement order by moving the auxiliary to its position following the subject, changing the tense to agree with the tense of the carrier sentence, and changing the pronoun to eliminate the second person of direct address.

In Unit VII we would return to the intuitive approach used in the first three units, again asking students to watch a group of sentence kernels combine into a long sentence. Unit VII would be different from Unit III, however, because the sentence that would develop on the screen would be a rather complicated one, and because, while growing, it would go through a series of editorial changes, or choices, that show how the kind of syntactic flexibility we had been emphasizing could be applied to actual writing. In the workbook, there would be several exercises that would begin to raise questions about style. For example, students would be asked to combine the kernels into sentences different from the sentences they saw on the screen, and to indicate which version they prefer and why. At this point in the course they would be capable of making judgments about the way language works, and able to enjoy making these judgments, perhaps only slightly inhibited by the fact that the author of the passage that they watch develop on the screen is William Faulkner. And, in this final unit, the point would be made that it is not necessarily better to write long sentences than short sentences—what is important is to be able to consciously choose what kinds of sentences one will write. This point is best made by the passage itself which includes one long and complex sentence and four short simple ones.

> When she was twelve years old, her father and mother died in the same summer, in a log house of three rooms and a hall, without screens, in a room lighted by a bug-swirled kerosene lamp, the naked floor worn smooth as old silver by naked feet. She was the

youngest living child. Her mother died first. She said, "Take care of paw." Lena did so.

As our video scripts began to evolve for each of the units, we found something else evolving as well. The "rules" we had agreed upon for the use of the medium implied the existence of something beyond the material presented on the screen—some kind of workbook. We didn't know at the start just what this workbook would be like, but it began to take shape as we worked. At first, it was a catch-all for all the things we didn't want to do on the screen, a repository for some of our rejected scripts, and for some of the more explicit explanation of linguistic phenomena that we tried to keep out of the video presentation. Eventually, we found a pattern emerging from the material that began to accumulate in the folder we had marked "Workbook." Most of the material there, in addition to explaining more explicitly what the students had seen on the screen and asking them to carry out exercises in which they applied what they had just learned, would deal with subtle nuances of grammar suggested but not explored by the video material. For example, in the workbook for Unit II we would initially ask students to recognize and to be able to produce two-part, three-part, and four-part sentence kernels, but we would not ask them to analyze the differences between the different types of kernel sentences. We knew that some students would want more explanation of the differences, and some teachers would want to explore the grammatical explantion of sentence kernels much further than we had in the intuitive approach we had taken on the screen, so we decided to add a section of the workbook called "Expertise," which was meant to be optional and which would answer some of the grammatical questions raised by the tapes. The "Expertise" sections of the workbooks are particularly important in the units that are highly analytical and which provoke questions about grammar that we deemed too intricate for most students to deal with in a basic writing course. But we knew that these grammatical questions might come up, and we wanted to provide a means of dealing with them. In the unit on nominalizations, for instance, all we would require the student to do would be to be able to produce nominalized structures according to patterns he sees on the screen. In the "Expertise" section of the workbook, however, we would deal with many of the complicated questions of verb tense that come up when working with nominalized structures. From our recent experiences using the tapes, we have decided that this "Expertise" section should probably be bound separately, since its complexity is confusing rather than enlightening to many students but continues to be useful to teachers and occasional students.

The structuring of the workbook raised another important pedagogical question that we may not have been conscious of when we started, the question of the level of the material we were presenting. There is always an assumption that remedial students must be given material that is "simple," which usually translates as watered down and childish. But, we had all worked with remedial students for many years, and shared the conviction that, because these students are intelligent adults, they should be given material that is appropriate to adults. The job of teachers is not to "simplify" material, but to structure lessons in such a way that each step is clear and that the logical progression leads students to learn what is being taught. It is the difference between the teacher who would translate Shakespeare into a version of modern English and the teacher who would help students master short passages of the text, a line, perhaps a word at a time, until they had mastered the technique, broken the code, of this very special kind of reading.

One of the criticisms we received at first from the people who produced our tapes was that the reading level of the material in the scripts was too difficult. It took a long time for them to see that this was intentional. College students have to learn to deal with long analytical passages in textbooks; we were giving them a strategy for doing so. But the workbook was essential to that strategy; it had to be structured as carefully as the tapes, and had to be coordinated with the tapes so that students would be led to carry out exercises that would reinforce what they had just learned on the tapes as well as raise questions that would prepare them for the next bit of information they were to receive on the tapes. The workbook was not written merely as support for the tapes, but is meant to interact with the tapes.

It is difficult for people who are producing media-based material to realize that the most important medium may still be print. But it is. The screen may be used to illuminate a point, but if this point is not reinforced by the printed page, it will be quickly forgotten. Reading and writing are very different from watching a screen. The British Open University, which has the most highly sophisticated video materials used in education today, uses such materials as only a small part of their courses. Students see one broadcast of a half hour every two weeks, and hear one radio program a week. The rest of their work is done through reading and writing.

One other aspect of the workbook that should be explained is our conscious rejection of the "mastery learning" approach. There are no pre-tests and post-tests in the workbook, and this may be seen by some teachers as a flaw. But what we set out to teach was different from the

discrete bits of information being taught by traditional skills programs. We are not opposed to mastery learning, but we have become aware of its limitations. A student can be taught a particular rule about, say, subject-verb agreement, and can be made to practice the application of that rule until he can pass a test that shows he has mastered it. This is a useful kind of exercise, and we think it is particularly useful if done in conjunction with the kind of understanding of the language that we are trying to encourage. But the material we wanted the students to master could not be adequately tested by exercises that had "right" and "wrong" answers. We were trying to get them to experiment with language, to try out different options, to recognize that there are many correct possibilities, and so it was impossible for us to anticipate what their answers might be. For this reason, it is important that a trained tutor be available to help students who want reassurance about the sentences they have produced. But students using the tapes must be told that they need not produce "right" answers. The questions raised by the exercises in the workbook are far more important than the correctness of the sentences they lead students to write.

The final step in the process we are describing was the actual producing of the tapes. Perhaps the most significant thing about this stage was that it came so late. We didn't even think about the actual production of the tapes until we had gone through the entire process we have outlined—defining the pedagogical guidelines, deciding how to use the medium, writing the scripts, and designing the workbook. The mistake that is often made is that producers are in a hurry to develop a pilot, usually so that they will have something concrete to show, a potential product. The trouble is, the product may be the wrong one if it hasn't been properly defined in advance. Instead, when we finally produced our pilot, we knew exactly what the entire course was going to be about, and so we were able to pay careful attention to developing a repertoire of video techniques that would remain consistent throughout the series and enhance each of the modules. As our repertoire expanded, we could modify our unproduced scripts to incorporate procedures that had already worked successfully in completed units and to eliminate operations that had thus become superfluous.

We did not merely hand over scripts to a producer and wait quietly for a finished product. Instead, we worked closely with the producer, Sam Hallman of the New York Network, during every step of the production process. This process was an education for everyone. We learned as much as we could about the kinds of things that could be done on video tape, as opposed to film. We learned, too, to transpose our scripts into

storyboard frames and thus diminish the persistent and necessary distance between a written script and a video animation. The technical specialists—a producer, a technical director, an art director, and a production assistant—were all devoted to exploring ways that the medium of video could be used to get across our pedagogical messages. They made no compromises. If anything, they went further than we expected them to, spending a great deal of time and money to stretch the medium to achieve the technical effects we wanted. We also had access to highly sophisticated equipment and technical staff in Albany, where the New York Network is located.

Yet another step that must be carried out during the development of any curricular materials is testing. We hope soon to be able to report the results of the formal testing of *The English Modules* currently being done. We are attempting to determine whether there has been any significant change in the control and maturity of syntactic structures used by a number of students who have worked with the tapes and accompanying workbooks. For the moment, all we have is informal feedback from teachers and students using the tapes on approximately forty campuses. Many students, we are told, find the tapes illuminating, while others need help in learning to learn from a screen. Teachers who report the best results seem to be the ones who watch the tapes with their students (particularly if they are remedial students) and "coach" them as they watch. Students tend to watch anything on television passively, and so it takes them a while to become aware of the kinds of responses they are meant to give to the material being presented on the screen. Teachers must at first reinforce the questions raised on the tapes and encourage students to participate in the inductive learning experience. Teachers themselves are enthusiastic about using the tapes, because the tapes often provide them with a new way of talking about language. Teachers who have been dissatisfied with using traditional grammar but at the same time sense a need to consider sentences analytically are interested in the possibilities for teaching that the tapes suggest. It will be some time before we have fully evaluated the tapes through formal testing, but we are sufficiently encouraged by the informal responses we have had so far to be convinced that video tapes can indeed be successfully used to introduce innovative teaching methods to a wide audience of teachers and to provide new insights to a large number of students.

In describing the process through which we developed *The English Modules,* which represent a relatively small amount of curricular material, we realize that we are describing a painstaking and expensive procedure. It is clear to us now why commercial publishers have not

been able to turn out first-rate audio-visual material. We were permitted a luxury—to experiment with an expensive medium—mainly because the New York Network is a part of the State University, and it had been decided that a portion of their production budget should be spent on producing innovative educational materials. If commercial publishers are unwilling to spend money on what is essentially "research and development," or the exploration of new methods of presenting material, then government and foundation money will have to support this kind of work. To develop the content of *The English Modules*, (a far less expensive procedure than the production of the tapes themselves) we were supported by money from the CUNY Chancellor, in the form of released time, and by a grant from the New York Foundation. We were being paid to look into new ways of teaching, and we feel that our effort was well worth the investment. More than ever, we see the need for curricular innovation, but more than ever, we see how expensive and difficult it is to produce anything innovative. We have, in fact, become convinced that educational technology in this country is relatively ineffective not because there is an intrinsic flaw in the notion of educational technology itself but because the producers of what is known as educational software have so often underestimated the difficulty of creating first-rate materials that will significantly affect the ability of our students to learn.[3]

[3]*The English Modules* were developed in collaboration with The New York Network by Sarah D'Eloia, Barbara Gray, Mina Shaughnessy, Blanche Skurnick, and Alice Trillin.

CALL FOR ARTICLES

PROGRAMS

The editors invite articles that can serve as working papers for those interested in learning how institutions are organized to teach writing. Articles should describe total programs of writing instruction and identify those features of the program that appear to have contributed in a major way to the success of the program.
Deadline for articles: ~~March 15, 1978~~. Sept. 30, 78

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Articles should be no more than 6,000 words (about 20 pages). Please follow the MLA Style Sheet, second edition, for matters of form. Include all footnotes at the end of the article. Enclose two copies of the article and a self-addressed stamped envelope. Manuscripts and correspondence should be addressed to: The Editors, Journal of Basic Writing, Instructional Resource Center, 535 E. 80th Street, New York, New York 10021.

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