

THE CHANGING PLANS FOR THE TEACHING OF GRAMMAR AND
THEIR RELATIONSHIPS TO THE TEACHING OF
WRITTEN COMPOSITION

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THESIS APPROVAL SHEET

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CHAPTER I

THE IMPORTANCE OF GRAMMAR AND COMPOSITION, THE PROBLEM, AND THE STUDY

Education has become increasingly important in the United States as more and more responsibility for developing the minds and characters of the people has been given to the schools. The accomplishments of education today have never been equalled. But with the increase in population and cultural progress the number and complexity of problems have increased. Accompanying the problems is the concern of dedicated educators and responsible citizens, concern which has activated inquiries and research for the purpose of solving problems and improving the quality of education in the schools. Everyone in this country is directly or indirectly involved in some phase of the education program. Of basic importance to the people is the medium of communication, the English language. Despite the obvious significance of English as the basis of communication, the teaching of it, particularly in secondary schools, is beset by a multitude of problems.

I. INTRODUCTION

In bygone days when the teaching of English as basic information for expression was a "cut-and-dried" affair due to the ill-fitting Latinate form imposed on it by classical

scholars there were fewer problems for the teacher, since all he had to do was to present the facts of orthography, etymology, syntax, and prosody. If the student didn't learn "appropriate" English, it was his own fault, not that of the teacher or the language. Times inevitably have changed. The shackles of the Latinate form have been removed from English in fact, if not entirely in practice. Yet it seems that the clearer view of English in its true form afforded us by linguistic science also reveals a multitude of new and complicated problems for the individual teacher.

The importance of an adequate knowledge of English was stated clearly and forcefully by Sampson:

It [English] is for English [and American] people the whole means of expression, the attainment of which makes them articulate and intelligible human beings, able to inherit the past, to possess the present and to confront the future.¹

Likewise, the so-called "Indiana Joint Statement," written by the English faculties from the four Indiana state-supported colleges and universities stresses the importance of English, particularly as it is concerned with the total curriculum:

Because the English language is our fundamental means of communication and because competence in using it is essential to achievement in every other subject

¹George Sampson, English for the English (Cambridge, England: Cambridge at the University Press, 1952), p. xvi.

and in life, it has a central importance in the curriculum.²

Pooley stated that:

Unlike the teachers of most of the other areas of instruction, the teacher of English is not only setting up goals for teaching English but also laying the foundation for a large part of the child's education. Nearly all learning rests upon oral or written communication. . . . What is commonly called "English" in the schools not only is the most important single division of instruction but is, indeed, the very instrument by which our society maintains and advances its culture.³

In the opinion of Neville, "Experiences in English provide the blood stream that goes to the heart of American education."⁴

The opinions above are those of professional educators in the field of English, but these people are not the only ones concerned with the part which English plays in the education of American youth. Other areas where the lack of a working knowledge of English in an individual makes itself readily apparent are those of business and industry. An interested person stated:

²Departments of English of Ball State Teachers College, Indiana State Teachers College, Indiana University, and Purdue University, "Joint Statement on Freshman English in College, and High School Preparation," September, 1960, p. 19.

³Robert C. Pooley, "Basic Principles in English Curriculum-Making," The English Journal, XXX (November, 1941), 709.

⁴Mark A. Neville, "Art of Plain English," The English Journal, XXXIX (February, 1960), 74.

. . . The biggest untapped source of net profits for American business lies in the sprawling, edgeless area of written communication. . . . Daily, this waste arises from the amount of dull, difficult, obscure and wordy writing that infests plants and offices.⁵

Another, concerned with the same problem, said, "Students entering business today are seriously deficient in ability to express themselves effectively in writing."⁶ This great need is even receiving attention in the highest echelons of our national government. President Kennedy's committee of education has recommended that financial assistance provided in the National Defense Education Act be extended in Title III to include English "under all appropriate provisions dealing with the teaching of modern languages," and that a "national fellowship program be developed to attract able people" to teaching.⁷

The structure of the English language is known as grammar. The study of grammar has taken many forms in the past, and so today the word "grammar" means many different things to different people, even to teachers of English. Yet the bulk of teaching about the structure and usage of

⁵Langley Carleton Keyes, "Profits in Prose," Harvard Business Review, XXIX (January-February, 1961), 105.

⁶David R. Dilley, "A Business Manager Looks at Business Writing," The English Journal, L (April, 1961), 265.

⁷The English Journal, L (April, 1961), 280.

English is called by this rather vague term. There seems to be little doubt (with a few exceptions) that grammar study is necessary for developing students' proficiency in the use of their native tongue, but controversy arises when "how to do it" or even "what is it?" is discussed.

Closely related to the teaching of grammar, in fact, a reflection of the individual's knowledge of grammar, is "written composition." As Pooley said, "At the heart of our instruction, through the history of English teaching, has been the work in composition."⁸ The results of written composition, the words and sentences in print or writing, are concrete evidence of the student's ability in the use of the language. Words spoken are lost to subsequent scrutiny (unless, of course, they are recorded by machine or in shorthand); words written may be studied and restudied in their original form. Therefore, the development of the student's proficiency may be clearly revealed. Conant thought composition important enough to recommend in his report on the American high school (recommendation no. 6) that, of all the time devoted to English in four years of high school, half of it should be spent on composition.⁹

⁸Robert C. Pooley, "Where Are We At?" The English Journal, XXXIX (November, 1950), 500.

⁹James B. Conant, The American High School Today (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1959), pp. 50-51.

II. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The evolution of English grammar from the early Latinate form to the structural linguistic approach of today has involved several significant changes. The methods proposed for teaching English today are direct results of this evolution, of these changes, though the methods may be either reactionary or progressive. What basic concepts have changed? How have these changes influenced the teaching of English grammar today, particularly in terms of written composition? What does scientific research show to be the truth about the language and methods of teaching it in the secondary school? What factors of teaching English have remained constant throughout this evolution? What do the leaders in the field of English instruction say about grammar and written composition in the secondary school? The problem, then, is to present material in which answers to these questions may be found, answers which may lead the reader to form definite conclusions consonant with the implications regarding the teaching of the structure of representative English sentences.

Significance of the problem. The importance of the English language as the medium of communication has been established in the introduction above. The problem of how to improve persons' abilities to communicate with their

fellow-men is significant in a multitude of ways, for, as LaBrant said, "The measure of the teaching of the grammar--the nature--of English is the degree to which it makes for more fruitful understanding among men."¹⁰ The fact that answers to the questions set forth in the statement of the problem may exist makes the problem significant. Furthermore, the fact that the problem is a cause for concern for not only people engaged in English instruction, but for the public in general and for people at the head of our federal government, would seem to indicate that this problem is of considerable significance. LaBrant also stated:

. . . Twenty centuries ago a teacher whose words were to change the history of the world spoke in a parable: "And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish." It is time to examine the patched and worn bottles into which we have put this magnificent, live wine of language. If our pupils miss its glory, if they use it carelessly as a form, a manner of dress; if they cease to guard it as a means for honest exploration of truth, the tragedy of atomic warfare may be slight.¹¹

III. THE STUDY

Purpose of the study. It is the purpose of this study to investigate the history of the evolution of English

¹⁰Lou LaBrant, We Teach English (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1951), p. 224.

¹¹Lou LaBrant, "New Bottles For New Wine," The English Journal, XLII (September, 1952), 347.

grammar with special emphasis on the situation of the last seventy years to determine which broad basic concepts concerning the teaching of English have changed and why, which have not changed and why, and what implications the results of this evolutionary process hold for the teaching of grammar in terms of written composition at the secondary school level.

Limitations of the study. The writer has limited this study to include only those textbooks deemed by competent critics as representative of given periods in the history of English grammar and selected comprehensive studies of this history in his investigation of the evolution of English grammar. The writer has limited his investigation of the situation in the last fifty years (including the current situation) to the works of eight recognized authorities in the field of English education and to contributing writers for the chief organ of the National Council of Teachers of English for secondary English instructors, The English Journal, and writers for a few other leading education publications. These limitations were made necessary because of the very great amount of literature on the subject, the study of which, though desirable, would be impractical in terms of the time required for such an investigation.

Although some of the implications suggested in this report by the changes in the methods of teaching English grammar might apply to all levels of instruction, elementary, secondary, and college, this study is primarily concerned with presenting material which holds implications for secondary instruction (grades seven through twelve).

(V. METHODS OF PROCEDURE

This study was limited to one method of procedure primarily, that of review and analysis of related literature in past and current publications available at Indiana State College. On several occasions, however, information was gathered by personal interview.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF RELATED LITERATURE

I. THE EXISTENCE OF THE PROBLEM

An English Teacher's Sonnet

The daily-gathered compositions glare
At me each evening. And I, in haste,
Always in haste, with red-rimmed eyes do stare
At words misspelled, misused, and oft erased.
I brood, and curse, and write in furious ink:
"Your thoughts are fine; how do you spell this word?"
Or, "Mechanics are all right, but you don't think,"
And, sometimes, "George, this sentence is absurd!"

And then the pen slams down. A cigarette
Begins to soothe my savage breast. And now
The pen begins to write comments on yet
Another theme. I dig, I sweat, I plow.
My pen slows to a halt--ideas gone;
But in my hands are lives; so I write on.¹

This sonnet expresses quite clearly the plight of thousands of English teachers who, despite their best efforts, still find themselves losing sleep and peace of mind in order to provide a learning experience in language usage and appreciation for their students. Yet this situation is by no means a new one. In 1612 Brinsley wrote concerning the ability of students in English grammar:

When gentlemen or others come in and examine them,
or their friends try them at home in things they
learned a quarter, or halfe a yeere before; they are

¹Brian McKinney, "An English Teacher's Sonnet," The English Journal, L (February, 1961), 133.

ordinarily found so rawe, and to have so forgotten, that I do receive great reproach.²

There have been times when the problem was less loudly pointed out than at present, such as was mentioned by Pooley: "It was between 1850 and 1910 that teachers of English enjoyed the greatest degree of assurance as to the rightness of what they were doing. Grammar was grammar."³ However, the increasing influx of students to college campuses has brought the results of their elementary and secondary education into much sharper focus, particularly concerning their ability to communicate. This ability (or inability) seemingly reflects on the language training they received during their first twelve years of formal education. The first paragraph of the "Indiana Joint Statement" stated:

Too many students entering the four state colleges and universities cannot read with understanding or write clearly. So serious is the problem presented by increasing numbers of poorly trained college freshmen that we--the departments of English of Ball State Teachers College, Indiana State Teachers College, Indiana University, and Purdue University--have combined to issue this statement.⁴

²John Brinsley, Ludus Literarius or The Grammar Schoole (London: printed for Thomas Man, 1612), p. 90 cited by A. Monroe Stowe, English Grammar Schools in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1908), p. 120.

³Robert C. Pooley, "Where Are We At?" The English Journal, XXXIX (November, 1950), 497.

⁴Departments of English of Ball State Teachers College, Indiana State Teachers College, Indiana University, and Purdue

Even those students who can read and write often have a problem which LaBrant credited to teachers of English:

What have we done to the use of language through writing when bright college students, sharing a world which threatens horrible disaster the while it also offers unthinkably enriched living, have nothing about which to write? The answer seems clear to me: We have consistently led them away from writing as a means for conveying thought and have substituted writing as an exercise in conjugation, punctuation, spelling, and declension. Consequently, if they can make complete sentences, correctly put together, adequately spelled, and written with margins and indentions, we and they have been satisfied. Small wonder they have nothing about which to write English themes?⁵

Along this same line of thought Pooley stated that:

. . . instruction in English in the schools of our country has laid great stress on improvement in the use of the medium, the English language, to the neglect of concomitant development of what to communicate. Until the need to communicate is developed, refinements in the use of the medium are sterile.⁶

There has been much criticism among leaders in the field of English teaching concerning the ways in which structure and the use of the language are being taught. Some of these critical comments reveal various aspects of the problem being considered. The first aspect deals with criticism of the grammar itself. Carpenter, Baker, and

University, "Joint Statement on Freshman English in College, and High School Preparation," September, 1960, p. 3.

⁵Lou LaBrant, "Teaching High School Students to Write," The English Journal, XXXV (March, 1946), 124.

⁶Robert C. Pooley, "Basic Principles in English Curriculum-Making," The English Journal, XXX (November, 1941), 710.

Scott wrote: "It has become evident that, of all the modern European languages, English is the one to which the old laws of concord apply least, owing to the fact that we have so few inflections."⁷ Cook stated that:

The grammar we have been teaching is not only futile --in the sense that it does not affect significantly the speech and writing habits of our pupils; it is false--in the sense that it does not describe accurately the mechanism of communication. It is as obsolete as the Ptolemaic astronomy.⁸

Likewise, Zahner wrote that:

. . . Our grammar and rhetoric failed not because there is any pedagogical weakness in the idea of teaching English grammar and rhetoric to boys and girls, but because what we taught and what we are still teaching were not and are not English grammar and rhetoric, but a series of rules, derived from heaven knows where, mostly from Latin, perhaps, to which the living language is supposed to conform--but doesn't.⁹

Several of the leaders in the field have urged the incorporation of the findings of linguistic science in the teaching of English. In 1941 Fries stated that, "The study of the real grammar of present-day American English has never yet

⁷George R. Carpenter, Franklin T. Baker, and Fred N. Scott, The Teaching of English in the Elementary and Secondary School (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1927), p. 192.

⁸Luella B. Cook, "End of the Trail," The English Journal, XLI (December, 1952), 540.

⁹Louis C. Zahner, "English, A Language," The English Journal, XXIX (June, 1940), 471.

been tried in the schools."¹⁰ Eleven years later Cook wrote:

. . . We've mistakenly assumed that language is a reflection of thought and that the characteristics which distinguish a sentence and its parts are matters of content. The new grammar, advocated by Dr. Fries, considers them matters of form.¹¹

Still, in 1954 Pooley was able to complain that:

. . . the teaching of grammar as a part of English instruction in elementary and high schools has not changed greatly in the last ten years and shows no sign at the moment of rapid change in the years immediately ahead. Such research as has been done by Professor Fries and others to elaborate a new and more scientifically based scheme of grammar than is now current has made almost no impression on the schools and is not yet evident in the more progressive textbooks.¹²

Closely related to such criticism of grammar itself is the criticism of certain attitudes toward grammar and composition on the part of educators. Pooley mentioned that investigations of schools in New York State showed that the difference between the goals of the English courses of study and what was actually being taught in the classes was tremendous. He stated:

. . . So wide was this gap that in many schools it would have been impossible to tell from the materials

¹⁰Charles C. Fries, "Grammar of American English in a Language Program," The English Journal, XXX (March, 1941), 198.

¹¹Cook, op. cit., p. 542.

¹²Robert C. Pooley, "Grammar in the Schools of Today," The English Journal, XLIII (March, 1954), 142.

and methods of instruction that the teachers had ever seen the course of study which was supposed to be their guide. . . . These conditions do exist not only in New York State but in yours and mine also.¹³

In comparing descriptive grammar to prescriptive grammar, Hook stated that:

. . . Description appears preferable to prescription. It seems absurd to tell the student that he must abide by certain rules that he hears violated by his friends, parents, and teachers, and sees violated in the daily newspaper and the weekly and monthly magazines.¹⁴

Neville has been constantly critical of the attitude that only the teachers of English should be completely responsible for the lingual abilities of the students. He said that:

It is certainly the responsibility of English teachers to teach the elements of written composition, and it is most certainly the responsibility of all other teachers to see that the elements are applied.¹⁵

He also warned against overemphasis of skills and techniques in language usage to the detriment of the quality of the thought expressed, and that "unless the quality of the idea expressed is high, all the hours spent in polishing the apple

¹³Robert C. Pooley, "Contributions of Research to the Teaching of English," The English Journal, XXXVII (April, 1948), 174.

¹⁴Julius Nicholas Hook, "What's Happening to Our Language?" Clearing House, XXIII (April, 1949), 455.

¹⁵Mark A. Neville, "English as a Positive Factor in Correlation," The English Journal (high school), XXVII (January, 1938), 47.

of speech will have been wasted on a rotten core."¹⁶

Another attitude under fire concerns the different situation met by youngsters upon entering the secondary school level from the elementary school. Pooley wrote that:

. . . The mistake commonly made, and perpetuated by the textbooks, is that the pupil in the seventh grade is ready for a total analysis of the grammar of English. Because of this tendency to teach too much grammar too fast, pupils build up resistance and resentment which characterize their attitude toward grammar throughout high school.¹⁷

A third aspect of English teaching which seems to receive more criticism from the authorities than almost any other is method of teaching. The methods a teacher uses determine to a great extent the results of his teaching, so it is not surprising that this area is much discussed. A great amount of the criticism decries the traditional, rule-bound methods. Much of it is practically synonymous with the criticism of grammar itself, mentioned above. Cook contended that teaching grammar by rule is a negative approach and that:

. . . there is a broad, positive content in the teaching of communication which we at the secondary level, at any rate, have been neglecting. We have been neglecting it in the mistaken view that the most important part of our job is the elimination of errors. Yet, judging from common complaints, we have not only

¹⁶Mark A. Neville, "Words Hurt," The English Journal, XXXV (March, 1946), 134.

¹⁷Pooley, "Grammar in the Schools of Today," p. 144.

failed in this phase of our job but have, in the bargain, developed a widespread dislike for the study of language.¹⁸

Cook believed also that the premature introduction of technical definitions did much to instill in students "a hard core of resistance."¹⁹

In another article Cook implied the reason for this method of teaching in an illustration. She took a class in auto mechanics in which the instructor began by saying that a prerequisite for understanding a motor was the learning of the names of its various parts and their functions. "He said that it would be easier for . . . his class if he started this way; but the fact is that it was easier for him." She added that, "The instructor knew his stuff all right; but he could not adapt it to our ignorance."²⁰ Zahner held a similar opinion: "Our absorption with grammatical terminology and analysis actually blocks us, and our pupils, from much of what matters most about language."²¹

¹⁸Luella B. Cook, "Inductive Approach to the Teaching of Language," The English Journal, XXXVII (January, 1948), 21.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 18.

²⁰Luella B. Cook, "Dual Approach to Grammar Study," The English Journal, XXXIV (March, 1945), 126.

²¹Louis C. Zahner, "Teaching of Language," The English Journal, XLIV (November, 1955), 448.

A textbook from which Smith quoted presented an apparently concise and accurate resume of the situation in which many teachers find themselves:

"It is difficult to fix progressive aiming points; it is difficult to test efficiency or to assess progress fairly. Because these difficulties are inherent in the subject, many teachers have attempted to find or to invent a body of fact which can be taught and then tested. They have tried to base their teaching on the teachable facts of grammar, to concentrate on the history of the language, or to study literature as a body of historical fact."²²

LaBrant, recognizing some aspects of this situation many years before the statement above was made, stated that:

Sentence structure and vocabulary problems which the teacher sets up not only lack real motivation, but cannot really be the problem of most pupils. The sentence structure of the term paper built upon references from mature, scholarly books cannot represent the basic sentence structures of the juvenile thinker.²³

Hook said:

Given enough time, Dean [a student] can learn to cut up a frog expertly. But if he cuts up a thousand frogs, can he then put a frog together? Given enough time, Dean can learn to take apart any sentence. But . . .²⁴

²²The Incorporated Association of Assistant Masters in Secondary Schools, The Teaching of English (Cambridge, England: The University Press, 1957), pp. 1-2, cited by Dora V. Smith, "Teaching Language as Communication," The English Journal, XLIX (March, 1960), 171.

²³Lou LaBrant, "Psychological Basis for Creative Writing," The English Journal (high school), XXV (April, 1936), 297-98.

²⁴Julius Nicholas Hook, "Stranlessly I Decompose the Sentence," Clearing House, XXVI (September, 1951), 25.

The implications of this statement were applied to a particular teaching method by LaBrant, who stated that there is evidence "strong for the conclusion that diagraming, once a popular form of mental gymnastics, is not helpful to writing nor to real understanding of grammar." She further stated that, "It is clear that frequently it greatly oversimplifies structure and distorts meaning."²⁵ Carpenter, Baker, and Scott likewise denied the adequacy of "rule-grammar" in developing correctness in speech. They made the point that, "One might speak correctly without a knowledge of the rules; even with the knowledge of the rules one might speak incorrectly."²⁶

Several authorities place much of the blame for this situation on textbooks. Pooley made the statement that, "Notwithstanding certain half-hearted leanings toward linguistic soundness in the introductory portions of some of our texts, they are, in specific matters, all reactionary."²⁷ LaBrant alluded to the weakness of the textbook system somewhat indirectly:

²⁵Lou LaBrant, We Teach English (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1951), p. 211.

²⁶Carpenter, Baker, and Scott, loc. cit.

²⁷Robert C. Pooley, "Grammar and Usage in Composition Textbooks," The English Journal, XXII (January, 1933), 18-19.

The school has too frequently neglected language as a subject in which questions are asked by the learner; the young student has had his questions assumed and been asked to use language chiefly as a means for supplying information to a teacher who presumably already has the facts in hand. There is a strange contradiction to normal behavior in this situation.²⁸

The fourth and final aspect of English teaching to be considered by this study is one of which teachers themselves have been very critical, as well as the higher authorities. This is the area of written composition itself. The sonnet at the beginning of this chapter was one teacher's feelings on the matter. Sampson wrote a similar statement, but the implications are considerably different:

. . . He [the teacher] marks the composition laboriously, correcting the more hopeful mistakes, or crossing out in despair the frequent passages that defy correction. This ceremony is gone through, once, twice, even thrice, every week. It can be described briefly as a hideous sacrifice of precious time and effort. The only compositions that can be corrected are those that least need correction. No one can correct a really bad composition.²⁹

This is to say that much of the labor and time spent "grading" written work is futile. Smith, in support of this idea, wrote:

. . . It is obvious to anyone who actually investigates the facts, that the most serious deficiency in the teaching of English expression in American high schools today is that instruction about language is,

²⁸Lou LaBrant, We Teach English, p. 79

²⁹George Sampson, English for the English (Cambridge: Cambridge at the University Press, 1952), p. 64.

in so many instances, being substituted for practice in the use of language.³⁰

Hitchcock remarked in one of his Breadloaf talks:

How strange that we teachers should keep our young people writing, writing, writing, writing, and that we should spend four-fifths of our time and energy in "correcting" what they write, when expression, or commitment to words, is but the last step in composition!³¹

On the other hand, Hach stated that "marking takes time, but unless a composition is properly evaluated, it might just as well not have been written."³² As a follow-up to this point Cook stated that:

It does make a difference how you say things or put them down on paper--a tremendous difference! If you do not say it right--that is, with a fine sense of appropriateness to the occasion and to the audience--the message itself is likely to be lost.³³

A point often made is that the emphasis in evaluating compositions of the students should be placed more on content than on minor grammatical details.³⁴ This implies a degree

³⁰Dora V. Smith, "English Grammar Again!" The English Journal (high school), XXVII (October, 1938), 648.

³¹Alfred M. Hitchcock, Breadloaf Talks on Teaching Composition (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1927), pp. 16-17.

³²Clarence W. Hach, "Needed: A Sequential Program in Composition," The English Journal, XLIX (November, 1960), 547.

³³Luella B. Cook, "Form in Its Relation to Thought," The English Journal, XXXVII (May, 1948), 223.

³⁴Hach, op. cit., p. 536; Joseph Mersand, "What Has Happened to Written Composition?" The English Journal, L (April, 1961), 235-36; T. A. Koclanes, "Can We Evaluate Com-

of evaluation of the students' thinking as well as their technical ability. There should be a balance between evaluating the two, technical ability and content, as Neville wrote:

. . . good composition is the result of intelligent planning in the arrangement of ideas so that they follow logically to produce the desired effect. Original expression should be encouraged, but we must not accept anything written carelessly.³⁵

Much of the responsibility for such problems is placed upon the teachers themselves,³⁶ on administrators and the community,³⁷ but Hook blamed the colleges and universities:

Every one of these criticized and bedeviled high school teachers went to college somewhere. If they do not perform their job well, it is partly because they were not prepared to do it.³⁸

This claim is supported by other writers and teachers as well.³⁹

positions?" The English Journal, L (April, 1961), 252-53; John McCafferty, "Beginning Composition in the Senior High School," The English Journal, XLIX (December, 1960), 636.

³⁵Neville, "English as a Positive Factor . . .," pp. 47-8.

³⁶Robert C. Pooley, "The Professional Status of the Teacher of English," The English Journal, XLVIII (September, 1959), 311.

³⁷Hach, op. cit., p. 537.

³⁸J. N. Hook, "How Can the Continuity in the Study of the Language Arts, the Social Sciences, and the Humanities in High School and the First Two Years of College Be Improved?" Current Issues in Higher Education, (September, 1960), 79-80, cited in The English Journal, XLIX (September, 1960), 428.

³⁹Hach, loc. cit.

Thus it can be seen clearly by the above evidence that a problem does indeed exist. In order to arrive at some conclusions as to reasons for the situation being what it is, it may be helpful to consider the history or evolution of grammar in terms of the changing plans or methods of teaching it.

II. THE CHANGING PLANS OF TEACHING GRAMMAR

The evolution of English grammar as an academic subject was not begun until sometime in the seventeenth century, as the following quote from the Oxford English Dictionary implies:

In early English use grammar meant only Latin grammar, as Latin was the only language that was taught grammatically. In the sixteenth century there are some traces of a perception that the word might have an extended application to other languages; but it was not before the seventeenth century that it became so completely a generic term that there was any need to speak explicitly of "Latin grammar."⁴⁰

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were referred to by Gruen as the "transition period" for grammar in England.

Following the precedent set by Latin grammar, nearly all the writers "organized their texts on the skeleton of orthography, etymology, syntax, and prosody. These compilers had a strong

⁴⁰James A. H. Murray, et. al. (eds.), The Oxford English Dictionary (London: Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1933), IV, 344.

tendency to latinize."⁴¹ Here was the beginning of a problem under which English teachers still labor. The teaching of English in grammar schools (or anywhere, for that matter) was just getting under way in this transition period. Even in 1612 this innovation was not much in evidence, as may be seen from the following passage:

But to tell you what I thinke, wherein there seems unto mee, to bee a verie maine want in all our Grammar schooles generally, or in most of them; whereof I have heard som great learned men to complain; that there is no care had in respect to traine up schollars so, as they may be able to express their minds purely and readily in our owne tongue, and to increase in practice of it as well as in the Latine or Greeke.⁴²

The attempted adaption of the Latinate form of grammar to English, or rather of English to the Latinate form, proved to be a curse that is still felt. Gruen described the operation thus:

. . . Blind or indifferent to the character of the English language, they made the unfortunate mistake of transferring bodily to a comparatively formless and concordless tongue the definitions and principles of a highly inflected language. . . . Thus was established a tradition which ever since has rested like an incubus on English grammar and made it the pseudo-science that it is. Besides begetting many absurdities and monstrosities of diction, it has created difficulties innumerable in the study of the subject and made it odious to the student and teacher alike.⁴³

⁴¹Ferdinand Bernard Gruen, English Grammar in American High Schools Since 1900 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 1934, p. 33.

⁴²Brinsley, op. cit., p. 22.

⁴³Gruen, loc. cit.

Likewise, even as early as 1868, Hales was bitterly clear in an expression of indignation at what the "vulgar grammar-makers" had done to the teaching of the English language:

. . . The vulgar grammar-maker, dazzled by the glory of the ruling language, knew no better than to transfer to English the schemes which belonged to Latin. . . . He never dreamt that the language for which he was practising his rude grammatical midwifery might have a character of its own, might require a scheme of its own. He knew, or he thought he knew, what the grammar of any language ought to be, and he went about his work accordingly. What chance had our poor mother-tongue in the clutch of this Procrustes? The Theseus of linguistic science, the deliverer, was not yet born. So the poor language got miserably tortured, and dislocated, and mangled. Who could wonder if it failed to thrive under such treatment? if it grew haggard and deformed? All the passers-by were on the side of Procrustes; and, when the victim shrieked at some particularly cruel stretch of its limbs, they called it disorderly, reprobate, vicious.⁴⁴

Of these early grammars Ben Jonson's is probably best known, though it was not the first. Furthermore, he apparently wrote it for foreigners, not for speakers of English, since the title page read: "The English Grammar, Made by Ben Jonson for the benefit of all Strangers out of his observation of the English Language now spoken and in use."⁴⁵ It is interesting and significant that all of the authorities

⁴⁴J. W. Hales, quoted by Henry Newbolt (Chairman), "The Teaching of English in England," Report of the Departmental Committee Appointed by the President of the Board of Education etc. (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1921), p. 285.

⁴⁵Ben Jonson, The English Grammar, edited by Alice V. Waite (New York: Sturgis and Walton Company, 1909).

on grammar mentioned in Jonson's bibliography were scholars in Latin and Greek. One passage from this book will suffice to indicate the state of linguistic science in Jonson's day: "We say not childen, which, according to the rule given before, is the right formation, but children, because the sound is more pleasant to the ears."⁴⁶

Grammarians were not unanimous as to what was correct, however. Dr. John Wallis, in 1698, protested other grammarians' attempts to force the structure of Latin upon English. As Gruen stated, Wallis:

. . . takes issue with Doctor Gill, Ben Jonson, Henry Hexam, and other grammarians who labor under the mistake of adapting the English language to the norm of Latin, and consequently "lay down many useless precepts regarding the cases, genders, and declensions of nouns; the tenses, modes, and conjugations of verbs; the government of nouns and verbs; and similar things, which are altogether foreign to our tongue, and hence rather beget confusion and obscurity than serve as explanation."⁴⁷

The eighteenth century comprised a period of great scholarly activity which Gruen termed the "heyday of classicism in English letters." The most important aspect of language was correctness, a trait inherited from the preceding century and maintained zealously by the classicists, who still held up Latin and Greek as examples of form to

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 70.

⁴⁷John Wallis, Grammatica Linguae Anglicanae (London: A. Miller, 1765), p. xxv, cited by Gruen, op. cit., p. 31.

which English must conform. These classicists even went so far as to point out "mistakes" made by favorite writers of the day: "They severely castigated any deviation from their standards and delighted to point out, as warning examples, 'improprieties' of diction even in such authors as Shakespeare and Milton."⁴⁸ Even the dictionary-writer, Samuel Johnson, was guilty of condemning certain usages popular with outstanding writers. For instance, in his dictionary he stated that the word nowise was commonly pronounced and spelled noways by "ignorant barbarians." Writers included in this category were Pope, Swift, Addison, and Locke.⁴⁹ Fries commented on the reasons behind the doctrine of correctness:

. . . The eighteenth century emphasis upon the study of English grammar as a means of correcting the speech of English people accompanied the rise of the middle classes into a new social prominence, and was part of their efforts to do the "correct thing" in a new social situation. America, with its essential middle-class background and point of view, has quite naturally carried on and emphasized this striving after correctness measured by the same standards.⁵⁰

It is interesting to notice that the grammarians of the eighteenth century regarded English as having set rules governing its usage despite the precepts of men they claimed

⁴⁸Gruen, loc. cit.

⁴⁹Albert C. Baugh, A History of the English Language (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1957), pp. 328-29.

⁵⁰Charles C. Fries, "Educational Pressures and Our Problems," The English Journal, XVIII (January, 1929), 11.

to admire and follow (Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian), who maintained that the current usage of a language should determine correctness.⁵¹ Due to the increased interest in language in general, however, more detailed studies of English were begun. The results of this increased interest were clearly evident in the nineteenth century in the progress made in the science of grammar. The most important single event in the field of English toward the turn of the century was the publication of Murray's English Grammar in 1795. This book was to provide the pattern for a myriad of English grammars during the nineteenth century.

The teaching of English in America as a true academic subject did not begin, according to Pooley, until the last decade of the eighteenth century with the use of Webster's Blue-backed Speller and the American edition of Murray's English Grammar. Pooley described the period from 1790 to 1850 as "the period of origins" for the teaching of English in this country, during which "school-masters discovered that English grammar could take the place of Latin grammar as a discipline for the training of young minds."⁵² Also during this period extractions from the great classics were used not only for literary appreciation but just as much for

⁵¹Gruen, op. cit., p. 36.

⁵²Pooley, "Where Are We At?" p. 496.

the "inculcation of moral virtues." This concept of grammar as "a wholesome discipline for the soul was nicely established by Lindley Murray and successfully continued by his imitators."⁵³ Lest Murray be considered the originator of his grammar principles, however, it should be noted that he was, oddly enough, an admitted copyist and was known as such by his contemporaries.⁵⁴

Though the scientific movement began in the eighteenth century, it did not really become a strong force until the nineteenth century. Yet the advances made in the science of grammar were not noticeable in the textbooks, particularly in the first half of the century. Gruen said of the writers of grammar textbooks during this period:

. . . With few exceptions, they followed the traditional definition and division of the subject and treated it either as a mental discipline, a training in logical thinking through parsing and correcting; or as a deductive science, based on a priori principles to be conned by rote, in the form of rules and definitions and classifications, as indispensable aids in the formation of correct language habits.⁵⁵

Despite the unprecedented popularity of English grammar as it was being taught, "the position of the formalists was challenged by educators with advanced views and grammarians with scientific training."⁵⁶ The "position" of the

⁵³Ibid., p. 497.

⁵⁴Gruen, op. cit., p. 40.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 54-55.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 55.

formalists was this:

. . . Grammar is the art of speaking and writing the English language; the child learns to speak by getting first the elements. A constant process of dividing wholes into parts, even to the letters as a starting point, is the natural and logical method for teachers who will start their pupils rightly. As written and spoken language is accomplished by the putting together of parts, so the taking of them apart is the initial step of the learning process. Parsing and correcting involves this extremely analytical philosophy. Therefore they are the best methods of learning.⁵⁷

Finally, however, in the last half of the nineteenth century, the movement away from the formalism of Murray and his original but still formalistic predecessor, Gould Brown, began to gather a little speed. Along with pressure from such educators as Henry Barnard and Horace Mann for reforms came the findings of several scientific fields which pointed away from formalism. Gruen described the movement thus:

Besides the advanced grammarians and educators, it was the great philologists of the last century that caused a revision of the notion of grammar. Basing their opinions on the findings of the newer sciences, such as anthropology, psychology, phonetics, and historical-comparative philology, these scholars viewed grammar, not as the art of speaking and writing correctly, but theoretically as the science of language and practically as the art of language. They observed and classified the phenomena of language, and they stressed, at least for school purposes, not so much the forms of isolated words (morphology) as their functions in sentences (syntax) and their relations to one another as

⁵⁷Rollo LaVerne Lyman, "English Grammar in American Schools before 1850," U.S. Bureau of Education Bulletin, No. 12 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1921), p. 122.

vehicles of thought (logical categories).⁵⁸

At the same time (the latter half of the nineteenth century) another faction gained some popularity. This faction was in favor of abolishing English grammar because, in their opinion, English was a "grammarless" language. This movement gained its popularity by originally opposing formalism in grammar teaching, but when the attack became a campaign against English grammar itself it began to weaken and finally lost its force. One effect of this movement was the lowering of the status of grammar among the English studies.⁵⁹

One of the most important publications to bring about a change in the attitudes of the grammar textbook writers was Sweet's A New English Grammar, which embodied many of the findings of science. This change did not come overnight, however. The degree of utilization of the findings of linguistic science in grammars grew gradually during the nineteenth century. By the turn of the century linguistic science was having a certain effect on the grammar-makers, but the majority of them still clung to Latinate forms, still defining, classifying, declining, and conjugating, still building on "the worm-eaten skeleton of orthography, etymology, syntax, and prosody; . . . still very much addicted

⁵⁸Gruen, op. cit., p. 43.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 44.

to formalism."⁶⁰ Neville stated the opinion that some of the best books on English grammar for teaching in schools (mis-used it is true) were written between 1890 and 1920 and implied that scientific facts of language were accumulating.⁶¹ But these reports apparently did little for the actual teaching of grammar. English teachers of grammar, as has been mentioned before, were considered right in whatever they did, from mid-nineteenth century through the first decade of the twentieth century. But, as Pooley said, the "seeds of revolt were already sown around the turn of the century."⁶² This "period of revolt" lasted until about 1930, and during this time many of the elements previously considered as basic in the study of English were challenged:

. . . The validity of grammar as a mental discipline was challenged, the age at which children were to be taught grammar was challenged, the ability of grammar to bring about better composition was challenged, the stuffiness of the literary transition was challenged, the college English entrance examinations were challenged, . . . The general unreality of English teaching was challenged; its apparent lack of relationship to the lives and interests of young people formed the chief basis of attack.⁶³

The changed point of view of grammar which, for the most part, was responsible for these challenges was called

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 53.

⁶¹Personal interview with Mark A. Neville, May 21, 1962, 11:00 a.m.

⁶²Pooley, "Where Are We At?" p. 497. ⁶³Ibid.

functional grammar. It represented a shift of emphasis from grammar study as an end in itself to grammar as a means to an end. Gruen defined functional grammar thus:

. . . Functional grammar is the grammar of description and consists of a small body of facts or usages. It is practical and usable. It stresses knowledge as a means to an end, in its application to daily use. It is defined in terms of social utility, in accordance with the modern conception of education that curricular matter should be determined by children's actual needs as the best means of providing for their social efficiency in later life.⁶⁴

The functional concept of grammar probably has many of its roots in the pragmatism of Peirce, William James, and John Dewey (though this does not directly concern this study).⁶⁵

These concepts, however, were those stated in publications and textbooks and shown to be more adequate than formal grammar in controlled situations, not necessarily those used by the teachers themselves. As mentioned above,⁶⁶ the gap between what was supposed to be taught and what was actually taught was, in many cases, very great, which may account for continued criticism of the teaching of English even though

⁶⁴Gruen, op. cit., pp. 59-60.

⁶⁵It seems probable that a study investigating the relation of functional grammar to the pragmatic movement in education and therefore possibly to Darwin's theory of evolution could be beneficial in bringing the history of English grammar up to date. This writer is not aware of any such study in existence.

⁶⁶Supra, p. 11.

the findings of linguistic science were amply publicized in professional journals.

Pooley called the period from 1930 to 1945 the "period of expansion" and, according to him:

. . . it was in this period that English apparently fell heir to everything which educators felt that children should have and which did not fall naturally into any other area of the curriculum. This is the period in which the newspaper, the magazine, the popular book, detective fiction, silent motion pictures, talking motion pictures, radios, electrified phonographs, and, finally, television became a part of the English teacher's job. To these were added instruction in speech, both private and public, debate, the conduct of public meetings, drama, and various clubs for the propagation of creative writing.⁶⁷

While the duties of the English teacher increased, so also did the population and therefore the number of students in each class. The result was more duties for the teacher without an increase in time. This shortage of time, or overloading of the English teacher, definitely had and is having an adverse effect on the quality of teaching and therefore on the quality of the finished product, the high school graduates (or even those students who drop-out). Norton expressed the situation quite clearly:

While considerable attention has been given to the improvement of programs in English, little or no thought has been given to the additional work load resulting for the classroom teacher who has been asked to initiate new courses, individualize instruction, foster creative development on the part of each pupil, continue the

⁶⁷Pooley, "Where Are We At?" p. 498.

development of reading skills throughout all grade levels, and enrich the entire learning process for pupils.⁶⁸

Thus it is clear that the plans of grammar have been changing and are continuing to change, despite occasional reactionary outcries by different individuals, and despite situations which force some teachers to revert to the methods by which they were taught or to become dependent on a textbook to teach their classes. LaBrant stated:

. . . It would be strange, indeed, if the chief medium for human communication did not change as the society which uses it changes; and yet one can find in schools of the United States classes in English which are practically identical to English classes of a half-century ago.⁶⁹

Certainly the English language is dynamic and, as LaBrant said:

Slight wonder, when we consider its manifold additions, the millions who speak our tongue, and all but limitless devices for dissemination, that English has changed and is continuing to change daily.⁷⁰

The significance of this evidence for the teaching of grammar and composition is made very clear when considered with a statement by Fries, one of the foremost advocates of the use of linguistic science in grammar study:

⁶⁸Monte S. Norton, "Teacher Load In English," The English Journal, L (February, 1961), 107.

⁶⁹LaBrant, "New Bottles For New Wine," p. 341.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 342.

. . . the scientific view assumes as fundamental that the practice of the users of a language is the only measure of correctness, and the advocates of this view would set out immediately to survey and record that practice.⁷¹

Yet, these changes have not been uniformly accepted, even by leaders in the field of English education. Pooley stated:

. . . We have, on the one hand, scientific linguistic knowledge beyond anything known to our predecessors. We have the theoretical and practical "know-how" to do a superior job of instruction in our language and literature. On the other hand, we have the survival in practice of practically every known ancient method, procedure, and point of view. A student can pass in dizzy progression from a puristic authoritarian to a linguistic neologist. He can be told within the span of thirty minutes that anyone who splits an infinitive is a barbarian and that anyone who opposes the splitting of an infinitive is an antiquarian.⁷²

The main question raised by the above information is: "What is the present situation, then, in English grammar instruction?"

III. THE CURRENT SITUATION

The English language today, and therefore its grammar, is the result of the many changes (the evolution) which are inherent in such a living language, as has been shown. In this respect, Zahner stated that:

⁷¹Fries, "Educational Pressures and Our Problems," p. 12.

⁷²Pooley, "Where Are We At?" p. 498.

A living language also, like all other living things, grows and changes through the process of death and birth, decay and rejuvenation. Old words go, or change their meanings; new words arise to meet new needs.⁷³

The general recognition of this constant change as a true characteristic of the language represents progress and a change of attitude in the recent past. Hook itemized some of the advantages of this characteristic of language:

Perhaps no one would argue that all change is for the better. But even a casual comparison of modern with old English reveals that the changes made in the last thousand years have resulted in improvement. Modern English can express more ideas and can express them with greater precision than could old English; yet in most respects modern English is a simpler language than that of our great grandfathers.⁷⁴

Much of the scientific study has dealt with the ways in which the language is learned and the ways in which it is used. A knowledge of these two aspects of language seems essential to someone who is to teach it to young people and those who want to learn to use it better. LaBrant's book, We Teach English, has covered these two aspects very thoroughly (as well as the history of English). She stated:

How does the student learn about the make-up of a sentence before he analyzes it and calls its parts by name? The great part of this learning goes on before he ever comes to school. It is outside the school that

⁷³Zahner, "Teaching of Language," pp. 443-44.

⁷⁴Hook, "What's Happening to Our Language?" pp. 452-53.

he does most of his talking, and here he makes sentences.⁷⁵

Jespersen, applying a principle of learning to English, stated:

As a matter of fact the trained grammarian knows whether a given word is an adjective or a verb not by referring to such definitions, but in practically the same way in which we all on seeing an animal know whether it is a cow or a cat, and children can learn it much as they learn to distinguish familiar animals, by practice, being shown a sufficient number of specimens and having their attention drawn successively now to this and now to that distinguishing feature.⁷⁶

Besides in the home and school, language is learned and developed in other situations, termed here general social interaction. Sometimes the language learned in general social interaction, perhaps within the peer group, conflicts with the language used in either the home or the school or both. LaBrant described such a situation as follows:

Many times the locution approved by the teacher is rejected by the pupil on the ground that he has not heard it used. "It doesn't sound right to me," he insists. Teachers sometimes resort to blind authority at this point, affirming the correctness of the expression and explaining it in terms of grammatical principles. Such an explanation is, of course, not sound and is almost certain to be ineffective anyway. Grammar is merely the orderly description of what is said by certain groups of people, and if those groups should change, the "rule" would itself have to be changed.⁷⁷

⁷⁵LaBrant, We Teach English, p. 216.

⁷⁶Otto Jespersen, The Philosophy of Grammar (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1924), p. 62.

⁷⁷LaBrant, We Teach English, p. 138.

This problem applies just as aptly to the language-of-the-home versus language-of-the-school situation. Much tact is required of the teacher who must in some way show a student that the language he has learned from his parents and friends is not proper or adequate. The educator's wise utilization of the student's awareness of social differences was advocated by Pooley:

. . . when a child awakens to a social consciousness for the first time, habits may be readily formed or broken, ambitions aroused or crushed. If he can be led to understand that poor English usage habits are as detrimental to his social advancement as bad manners and untidy personal appearance, half the battle is won. . . . The change is not the product of persistent rules, injunctions, and scolding, as every mother knows. When the social objective is aroused, the changes take place automatically; until the objective is realized, external coercion is unheeded. It is important that the objectives of good language use arise from a felt need for positive ends, rather than merely continued correction of faults.⁷⁸

The responsibility for developing the students' language abilities lies primarily with the teacher--not just the teacher of English but every teacher--according to Neville. He stated that:

English is a dynamic process of interaction between individuals and the culture. The focal point of growth is communication ability through language. If we intrust the instruction of youth to teachers who, in default of necessary insight and enthusiasm, insist upon conventional subject matter and methods, historical details, and the minute examination of words and phrases apart from the

⁷⁸Robert C. Pooley, Teaching English Usage (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, Inc., 1946), p. 192.

actual speaking and writing of students, we shall repeat the accumulated failures of the past and build the foundation for a ruinous future.⁷⁹

Though lack of insight or enthusiasm may account for much of the inability on the part of teachers to provide a learning experience for the students, some of the responsibility seems to rest with textbooks, upon which some teachers depend almost entirely. Cook wrote in 1939 that:

. . . We seem to assume that the setting-up of a practical incentive for writing or speaking will work a teaching miracle. When it doesn't, we merely move the activity up to a higher level. Our popular textbooks are manuals of activities, which provide an abundance of busywork.⁸⁰

In order to discourage teachers from relying very heavily on the textbook, Cook later wrote:

We have failed, too, to realize that language improvement does not follow the logical outline of a textbook. There's very little about the learning process that is logical. True, that which we have already learned can be set down in a logical form, but language habits are not formed a step at a time. Teachers who wish to finish the sentence, or use of the comma, or any other unit, might therefore just as well not begin.⁸¹

Likewise, Neville stated that:

. . . We have learned that English will not function

⁷⁹Mark A. Neville, "Let Us Be Sensible," The English Journal, XLI (March, 1952), 138-39.

⁸⁰Luella B. Cook, "Are We Accomplishing Our Aims In the Composition Curriculum?" The English Journal, XXVII (October, 1939), 630.

⁸¹Luella B. Cook, "Fundamentals in the Teaching of Composition," The English Journal, XXX (May, 1941), 366-67.

adequately as an incidental of a narrow or broad subject-matter organization. We have also learned that English does not function adequately if taught as a subject-matter course in and for itself. Therefore, we are forced to the conclusion that English is important only if it is recognized as a condition of school life.⁸²

In fact, Neville claimed, "English is not . . . something to be taught apart from other vital educational activities as if it were only a tool or a skill to be mastered against its possible use at some remote time."⁸³

There are, on the other hand, teachers who are reluctant to release their hold on the formal, traditional method of teaching grammar to develop students' language abilities.

The position of the formalists was stated by Reed Smith:

. . . Let us insist on the undying contemporaneity of grammar and keep constantly in view the fact that one of its first objectives is to recognize as authority for usage the accepted standard of today, and the fact that "most English grammar at present is nothing more than rules of long standing for the clear, unmistakable, and immediate transfer of thought."⁸⁴

Contrarily, Dora Smith answered the above article with an article of her own, in which she said:

Boys and girls have a right to be graduated from American high schools with a sense of security in their use of the mother-tongue. Whatever is archaic or proved superfluous on the basis of careful, scientific investi-

⁸²Mark A. Neville, "As We Review Unification," The English Journal, XXIX (June, 1940), 485.

⁸³Neville, "Art of Plain English," p. 74.

⁸⁴Reed Smith, "Grammar: The Swing of the Pendulum," The English Journal, XXVI (October, 1938), 642.

gation over a long period of time must be discarded if this end is to be achieved.⁸⁵

Students are evidently often confused and misled about the true structure of English by teachers using formalist teaching methods or teachers who depend too much on the textbook. LaBrant said that, "All too frequently high school students somehow gather the idea that grammar is something superimposed on language, that language is logical and must fit a pattern."⁸⁶ Because of this misunderstanding and confusion, both on the part of the teachers and of the students, Neville wrote:

. . . I feel deeply the need for restating the principles of English grammar so that teacher and pupil alike can understand them. But I do not subscribe even momentarily to the proposition that materials that are badly taught should be eliminated from the curriculum.⁸⁷

Here again is the implication that a gap exists between what is taught and what should be taught. Hook expressed the belief that in order for students to gain from their language study teachers should use descriptive rather than prescriptive methods:

. . . if teachers describe linguistic usage, they tell students the facts of sentence life. They let students know that language does change and is changing, that some constructions approved by our grandparents are now considered undesirable, and that other construc-

⁸⁵Dora V. Smith, "English Grammar Again!" p. 648.

⁸⁶LaBrant, We Teach English, p. 211

⁸⁷Neville, "Art of Plain English," p. 73.

tions condemned in Grandpa's textbooks are now standard English.⁸⁸

Another hindrance to the learning situation in language study is teachers' failure to determine what the students already know before plotting a course of study. This often leads to repetition which is boring and unchallenging for the student. This situation led Sampson to write that:

. . . Neither in art nor in science can we begin at some arbitrary point called the beginning: we have to begin at a very clear point called the end--our end of knowledge, not the other undiscoverable end.⁸⁹

In other words, instruction should begin where the student's knowledge ends, thereby avoiding unfruitful and even detrimental repetition.

There has been much mention of "the findings of science" in this study, but the discussion would not be complete without some specific treatment of these findings, including structural linguistics. As mentioned before, these findings seem to have increasing influence on the teaching of English grammar. LaBrant expressed the situation well:

. . . The grammar which many of us learned, with emphasis on classification and definition, is yielding to a new scholarship which examines the real structure of today's English. It sees words not as independent units but as parts of a structured whole.⁹⁰

⁸⁸Hook, "What's Happening to Our Language?" p. 455.

⁸⁹Sampson, English for the English, p. 36.

⁹⁰Lou LaBrant, "As of Now," The English Journal, XLVIII (September, 1959), 299.

The efforts of Fries have been particularly significant in establishing the above attitude in the thinking of leaders in the field of English teaching. The work done by Fries, Jespersen, Pooley, and others has proven the necessity for a knowledge of the scientifically based schemes of grammar on the part of the classroom teacher, particularly the teachers of English. Smith considered the new linguistics approach as a simplification which helps teachers provide a more complete learning situation in the language:

Modern linguistics and other approaches to the simplification of our teaching of the language are helping us to sense what is significant in English grammar and usage. That usage is a matter of convention rather than of grammatical rule is now a clearly established fact.⁹¹

The effect of scientific language study was reflected also in LaBrant's writing:

. . . It has been proved repeatedly that there is little correlation between being able to formulate rules and grammatical principles and being able to punctuate and make good sentences. Examine, if you will, the research on teaching writing published between 1920 and 1935 and discover how thoroughly this question has been answered with a show of negative results for formal teaching.⁹²

Likewise, Pooley stated that:

Grammar is the organization of knowledge about English, . . . but this organization is useful only in the context of the actual use of the language in writing and

⁹¹Dora V. Smith, "Teaching Language as Communication," The English Journal, XLIX (March, 1960), 171.

⁹²LaBrant, We Teach English, p. 202.

speaking. Grammar as such has no intrinsic value, at least for children.⁹³

The facts of language structure as scientifically revealed and verified are being increasingly utilized in the grammar textbooks, as pointed out by Pooley:

Authors of elementary-school textbooks on English today omit large numbers of the usage items taught in 1920 and use the terms "preferred" or "desirable" in describing usage forms rather than "right" and "wrong." The high-school textbooks nearly all acknowledge the principle of change in language and bow to the authority of current usage over logic, analogy, and even grammar.⁹⁴

He added, however, that "college textbooks, on the whole, have been more conservative," which would appear to be a weakness in the system, especially when such "conservative" texts are used in teacher-training institutions.

The results of the scientific study of the English language are also reflected in Pooley's definition of "good English" which appeared in his grammar textbook:

. . . Good English is that form of speech which is appropriate to the purpose of the speaker, true to the language as it is, and comfortable to speaker and listener. It is the product of custom, neither cramped by rule nor freed from all restraint; it is never fixed, but changes with the organic life of the language.⁹⁵

Sampson felt that the study of English should not be limited

⁹³Pooley, "Grammar in the Schools of Today," p. 143.

⁹⁴Pooley, "Contributions of Research to the Teaching of English," p. 173.

⁹⁵Pooley, Teaching English Usage, p. 14.

by being regarded as just another "subject" in the elementary, and secondary schools. He stated:

. . . English is really not a subject at all. It is a condition of existence rather than a subject of instruction. It is an inescapable circumstance of life, and concerns every English-speaking person from the cradle to the grave.⁹⁶

Neville concurred with this point of view and elaborated upon the functions of English as a "condition of school life:"

. . . As a condition of school life, English has a two-fold function: it is a social-practical process and a social-aesthetic process. The social practical process is a necessary part of all teaching and learning regardless of specialization and intensity of attention; the social-aesthetic process is also the result of wide integrated experience, but must be guided by one with the ability to receive and transmit feeling and emotion.⁹⁷

Linguistic science has for years shown that those who believe that conventional or rule-grammar (traditional) makes sense have not been objective in their observations of the language, according to Laird.⁹⁸ He pointed out the many incongruities and drawbacks of "conventional" grammar when compared to the findings of linguistic science. In order to apply these findings specifically to the teaching of English several magazine articles have been written dealing

⁹⁶Sampson, op. cit., p. 28.

⁹⁷Neville, "As We Review Unification," p. 486.

⁹⁸Charlton Laird, The Miracle of Language (New York: World Publishing Company, 1953), pp. 147-58.

with this problem.⁹⁹ Likewise, this problem has been considered in some outstanding books.¹⁰⁰ Some textbooks have been written strictly along structural linguistic lines, such as the one by Roberts.¹⁰¹

IV. PROPOSED REMEDIES FOR THE PROBLEMS

In the various articles and books there have been many expert opinions expressed as to what should be done to make the teaching of English and its grammar more realistic, more closely related to the facts of language structure and how it is learned and used. As the various proposals are reviewed here, it should be remembered that even the opinions of these learned people are the result, in a sense, of the evolution of English grammar. Also reflected in these

⁹⁹Samuel R. Levin, "Comparing Traditional and Structural Grammar," College English, XXI (February, 1960), 260-65; J. L. Lamberts, "Basic Concepts for Teaching from Structural Linguistics," The English Journal, XLIX (March, 1960), 172-76; W. L. Anderson, "Structural Linguistics: Some Implications and Applications," The English Journal, XLVI (October, 1957), 410-17; and Peter F. Holub, "DIAL 1 2 3 4," January 5, 1961. (Mimeographed radio program.)

¹⁰⁰Charles C. Fries, The Structure of English (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1952); Otto Jespersen, The Philosophy of Grammar (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1924); S. I. Hayakawa, Language in Thought and Action (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1939); and W. N. Francis, The Structure of American English (New York: Ronald, 1958), to name a few.

¹⁰¹Paul Roberts, Patterns of English (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1952).

proposals are the progressive ideas based on the body of facts which form the ever-expanding field of linguistic science. Along with these ideas are the proposals which apply the relatively "new" facts of language learning to the teaching of language.

One of the basic elements in any human action is that of thinking. The ability to think is necessary for education to take place, and in turn, education should develop this ability. This is applicable to language usage, as Cook has pointed out several times. She stated that:

. . . It is the thought-processes which underlie speaking and writing activities which should claim first attention, and our curriculum should set up neither literary strands nor social strands but psychological strands. In other words, form should wait upon substance and thus gain for its own perfection a new energy.¹⁰²

Development of these thought processes is related in a very great sense to intellectual growth. Cook believed that composition provides exercise of the facilities, such as are involved in "observation," which stimulate thinking and intellectual growth, as she stated in a later article:

. . . Intellectual growth is based on an ever widening appreciation of meaning. As commonly used, the word "observation" includes more than seeing or hearing separate sights and sounds; it includes, as well, an interpretation of what these sights and sounds mean. Thus the teaching of composition as a tool of thought carries with it the responsibility of helping students on any

¹⁰²Cook, "Are We Accomplishing Our Aims . . .," p. 636.

level not only to discover more meanings but to sharpen and refine them.¹⁰³

Supplementing this idea and expressing it in another way,

Hook stated:

. . . Thinking requires two things: material and the putting together of material. The material is knowledge-- facts, experiences, observations. The putting together involves seeing the relationship between two or more parts of the material.¹⁰⁴

Thus, it can be seen that thinking is, or should be, an important aspect of the language program. Cook stated as early as 1929 that, "perhaps a progressive curriculum some day will provide a course in thinking." She added that, "In the meantime it rests with the composition classes to perceive this dual function of teaching the what to say as well as the how to say it."¹⁰⁵

It is noteworthy that written composition is insisted upon in the above material as the means of teaching "what to say" and "how to say it." The value of the practice of language usage involved in written composition has been widely recognized, and knowledgeable people have advocated its use

¹⁰³Cook, "Fundamentals in the Teaching of Composition," pp. 367-68.

¹⁰⁴Julius Nicholas Hook, "Characteristics of the Award-Winning High School," The English Journal, L (January, 1961), 243.

¹⁰⁵Luella B. Cook, "Individualism in Our Composition Classes," The English Journal (high school), XVIII (January, 1929), 39.

as a principle means of teaching language for many years. Hitchcock recognized the values of written composition. Addressing the individual he asked, "Are you really anxious to improve your powers of expression? Then give them plenty of systematic exercise. Go into training at once. Practice."¹⁰⁶ Lest the teacher be carried away with the idea of written composition as a teaching method, however, Hitchcock qualified his recommendation of it with a plea to the teachers to take into consideration all aspects of the whole process of written expression:

. . . Can we expect thoughtful compositions unless we assign topics calling for thought, give time for thinking, and then judge themes, with careful consideration for the limitations of immaturity, for their thought-content? The compositions need not be long; ten lines may suffice. Length has little to do with it. But preparation for writing may take a long time.¹⁰⁷

Since perhaps the most tangible examples of students' knowledge of grammar are found in written composition, it has been recommended occasionally that grammar and writing be taught at the same time. Corbin wrote that:

. . . Public and intramural pressure on today's schools to strengthen their academic programs has a special implication for the teacher of English. One of its main demands is not for more extensive teaching of grammar, as might once have been true, but for more and better writing. When a need for grammar is suggested

¹⁰⁶Hitchcock, op. cit., p. 48.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 111.

these days it is almost always in relation to composition.¹⁰⁸

Evans suggested that grammar and writing be taught simultaneously for grammar's sake: "The study of grammar should not be weeks, months, or semesters away from the practice of writing; it should be only minutes away."¹⁰⁹ This recommendation is made a little more complicated (and perhaps more practical) in light of another previous one by Evans, in which he proposed that literature and composition are also "inseparables" and should be taught together as a continuous operation.¹¹⁰ This indicates that he favors language-arts as opposed to segregated lessons in language, composition, and literature.

Others have been more concerned with writing as a means of getting a better understanding and control of the language in a more general sense. Cook wrote that:

. . . Even in the junior high school and beyond, sentence sense may be taught without benefit of formal definition. We should expect to teach sentence sense, furthermore, not once and for all, but continuously in an enlarging context. To Thoreau, the "mastery of the

¹⁰⁸Richard Corbin, "Grammar and Usage: Progress But Not Millenium," The English Journal, XLIX (November, 1960), 552.

¹⁰⁹Bertrand Evans, "Grammar and Writing," Educational Forum, XXIII (January, 1959), 219.

¹¹⁰Bertrand Evans, "Composition and Literature," Educational Forum, XXIV (May, 1960), 430-31.

sentence" was, on his own confession, the job of a lifetime.¹¹¹

Cook also considered composition as it applies to the various "subject area" classes outside the language arts area. Her ideas of writing as a stimulant to thinking are also evident here:

The composition class might well be considered the unifying agency within our curriculum. For this reason the composition classes may be the least regimented, the most informal of classes where individual thinking power is stimulated up to the capacity of each student. It is within the composition classes that a wider range of variation should be permitted. In other classes the chief aim is to crowd large masses of information into the heads of pupils. In the composition classes the aim should be to release this accumulated bulk in some intelligible form.¹¹²

LaBrant's ideas along this line are somewhat similar, but she placed more emphasis on the psychological values of creative writing. In her words, "Creative writing provides an almost universally available outlet for creative energy." In her opinion, this point leads to consideration of another closely related fact that "free or creative writing has a social and a therapeutic value."¹¹³ Neville believes that the term "personal writing" is more applicable to this type

¹¹¹Cook, "Inductive Approach to the Teaching of Language," pp. 17-18.

¹¹²Cook, "Individualism in Our Composition Classes," p. 34.

¹¹³LaBrant, "Psychological Basis for Creative Writing," pp. 294-95.

of writing rather than "creative writing."¹¹⁴ LaBrant's concern as reflected in these two principles was to meet the needs of the pupils, as well as the needs of society, through writing. Cook evidently had this idea in mind when she wrote:

. . . The need both to understand and to be understood is a persistent, vital human need, challenging the very best which the English teachers of America have to offer. One of the best means at our disposal for meeting this challenge, I believe, is to put writing back into the English curriculum, not only as a necessary social skill, nor as a basic discipline in the pursuit of language facility, but as a vital force in the development of personal integrity.¹¹⁵

The lack, in too many cases, of a learning experience in the English class has led several leaders in the field of English teaching to be concerned. They feel that the pupils' needs could be met better than they are now. Some of the proposals above were made with this in mind. Others have also been made. LaBrant quoted from a report of the General Education Board of the School of Education at the University of Arkansas and the State Department of Education (Arkansas) in 1934 (called the "Arkansas Plan") as a proposal of things needed and things to come:

¹¹⁴Personal interview with Mark A. Neville, July 23, 1962, 11:30 a.m.

¹¹⁵Lue11a B. Cook, "Writing as Self-Revelation," The English Journal, XLVIII (May, 1959), 248.

Emphasis is upon writing and speaking as expressions of pupil drive, rather than as satisfaction of assignments. Punctuation and correct form are means, not ends. "This English program recognizes the need of the pupil for usable knowledge of what is commonly known as correct grammar in both oral and written discourse. This need will not be neglected on this program, but the method of beginning with page one of some good English grammar and wading through the entire book with a group of students, irrespective of the personal and specific needs of each, will be discontinued. Dictionaries, grammars, reference books, and other sources of information will be at the disposal of the pupils to use as their needs arise. The teacher will guide the pupils in correcting their individual errors in speaking and writing. Class time will be devoted to the needs of the pupils when difficulties common to the class arise. . . . The idea that language is something to be used instead of something to be learned will be understood by teacher and pupil."¹¹⁶

LaBrant's concern with the pupils as individuals, each with somewhat different needs was emphasized by a later statement that, "As a teacher of English, I am not willing to teach the polishing and adornment of irresponsible, unimportant writing."¹¹⁷

Pooley also has felt a concern with meeting the needs of the pupils in regard to their language abilities. He expressed this concern in a statement which has the tones of a warning to teachers:

I propose that the great change that we must anticipate and bring about before an angry society forces the

¹¹⁶Lou LaBrant, "New Programs in Arkansas," The English Journal (high school), XXIV (October, 1935), 653-54.

¹¹⁷LaBrant, "Teaching High School Students to Write," p. 123.

change upon us is to teach students what they need when they need it, regardless of grades and years, and to measure their progress not by the clock or the calendar but by what they can do.¹¹⁸

This is evidently a plea for the abolishment of the grade system (one through twelve) which is still prevalent in schools and for the establishment of the "ungraded" system.

As he stated earlier in the same article:

The first change which current conditions seem to make imperative is to replace the rigid system of grade placement in subjects which is characteristic of the American high school. I refer to the system which places all first-year students in the same class with the same course of study, regardless of the factors of mental age, intelligence quotient, and reading ability.¹¹⁹

As far as the English program itself is concerned, Pooley stated that, "Experienced teachers of English at any level know that the only way to teach the successful use of English is to give constant and guided practice in speaking and writing."¹²⁰

As far as meeting the needs of the pupils is concerned, Neville has constantly advocated that the learning of the English language, in the school just as in everyday life, cannot be confined to one period per day. It is a full-time job. Whether the area is language or otherwise, one point

¹¹⁸Robert C. Pooley, "English in the Coming High School," The English Journal, XXXVII (June, 1948), 286.

¹¹⁹Ibid., p. 284

¹²⁰Pooley, "Contributions of Research . . .," p. 171.

that should be kept in mind by any teacher, as was stated by Neville is this: "The concept of learning that naturally follows the new viewpoint is that the individual learns best on his own level of understanding."¹²¹

The point that could be made here is that at the pupil's "own level of understanding" it may be "unnatural" to try to learn about different subjects in segregated, fifty-minute chunks. This has special significance in the area of the English language, even in a "core" system, as Neville pointed out:

. . . It must not be a question of where English can fit into the correlated curriculum; it must be a recognized fact that without English intelligently taught and skillfully applied to all activity, we cannot have a correlated curriculum; in fact we cannot have a curriculum at all.¹²²

Smith stated that:

Whoever can come forward with a program in the teaching of English psychologically sound and adapted specifically to the needs of boys and girls in this country today will, I believe, gain the ascendancy.¹²³

Yet the question still arises, how is this to be done?

This leads to consideration of some proposals that have been made relative to methods used in providing the

¹²¹Neville, "As We Review Unification," p. 483.

¹²²Neville, "English as a Positive Factor in Integration," p. 44.

¹²³Dora V. Smith, "Today's Challenge to Teachers of English," The English Journal, XXX (February, 1941), 107.

learning experiences in language which will fulfill the needs of the students. Composition as a method has been touched on above, with its close relationship to grammar instruction. In general, there seems to be one major conflict of methodology in grammar instruction. That is the conflict between the descriptive methods and the prescriptive methods, which has also been mentioned before. The descriptive methods are the modern, progressive methods that have resulted from scientific study of the language and of language habits of people. The prescriptive, on the other hand, are the classical, traditional, perhaps often reactionary methods. Proposals involving changes from the prescriptive to the descriptive are regarded, for the most part then, as remedies of the situations. In proof of this, Fries quoted several books on grammar in 1929:

(quoting Henry Sweet's New English Grammar, 1891)
"In considering the use of grammar as a corrective of what are called 'ungrammatical' expressions, it must be borne in mind that the rules of grammar have no value except as statements of facts: whatever is in general use in a language is for that very reason grammatically correct. A vulgarism and the corresponding standard or polite expression are equally grammatical--each in its own sphere--if only they are in general use."

(quoting Grattan and Gurrey's Our Living Language, 1925) "The grammar of a language is not a list of rules imposed upon its speakers by scholastic authorities, but is a scientific record of the actual phenomena of that language, written and spoken. If any community habitually uses certain forms of speech, these forms are part of the grammar of the speech of that community."

(quoting H. C. Wyld's Elementary Lesson In English Grammar) "A grammar book does not attempt to teach people how they ought to speak; but on the contrary, unless it is a very bad or a very old work, it merely states how, as a matter of fact, certain people do speak at the time at which it is written."¹²⁴

Though methods which followed the above conceptions of grammar were advocated by many leaders in the field, few teachers actually shifted emphasis in their classes from prescriptive to descriptive activities, so that in 1946 Pooley was amply justified in making the following recommendations:

In the teaching of language and grammar we badly need a housecleaning. . . . First candidate for eviction is the ancient and wobbly theory that instruction in formal grammar is essential to the effective use of English in speech and writing. There is no evidence to be gathered by reputable means to show that grammar in any way improves the normal speech and writing habits of pupils. . . . But there is much evidence that the teaching of grammar actually inhibits growth in the successful use of language by consuming large blocks of time which should be given to the practice of speaking and writing.

Second on the list for the junkman are all the textbooks, workbooks, drill pads, and practice sheets which attempt to teach usage, grammar, and composition by the dissection and mutilation of printed sentences.¹²⁵

LaBrant, in support of similar ideas as these, directed a

¹²⁴Charles C. Fries, "Educational Pressures and Our Problems," p. 11, quoting Henry Sweet, New English Grammar (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1900-03), p. 5; Grattan and Gurrey, Our Living Language (London: T. Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1925), p. 25; and H. C. K. Wyld, Elementary Lesson in English Grammar (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1925), p. 12.

¹²⁵Robert C. Pooley, "These Things Shall Not Pass," The English Journal, XXXV (February, 1946), 80.

point at the special terminology of grammar:

. . . Whatever is decided about how or when to teach grammatical terminology, two points should always be clear to both student and teacher: One, that until words are in discourse, grammatical classification is impossible; and two, that when we are teaching grammar, we are (if we are scholarly at all) merely describing the practices of certain groups of people who speak our language.¹²⁶

The continued dissatisfaction of the public and the educators with the results of language instruction, though sometimes a bit unreasonable or inconsistent with the facts, seems to be due primarily to individual teachers' inability or unwillingness to incorporate into daily classroom procedure those elements of language learning shown to be effective by modern linguistic research, as well as educational research in general. Pooley stated what he thought to be the main problem in the prescriptive method of teaching, and what he thought a general remedy would be:

. . . Traditional grammar teaching has been conducted largely by deductive instruction. The student is given a definition or a rule, he learns it by memory, he is shown applications of it in the writing of others, and ultimately he is expected to apply it to his own writing. The weakness in this method is the difficulty of establishing the final step, the student's application of a principle to his own writing. In inductive teaching the procedures are reversed. The student is led to use a certain part of speech or sentence structure to express ideas. . . . It is grammar learned in this manner which contributes to growing skill in composition.¹²⁷

¹²⁶LaBrant, We Teach English, p. 211.

¹²⁷Robert C. Pooley, "What Grammar Shall I Teach?" The English Journal, XLVII (September, 1958), 331-32.

Thus it can be seen that much of the responsibility for the students' development of proper language habits lies with the teachers, and as much of the material above indicates, not just English teachers but all teachers. The English teacher, however, does (or should) assume more than an average amount of responsibility, since he is (or, again, should be) a specialist in the field of language usage.

Fries stated that:

. . . Only as English teachers know the English language sufficiently to diagnose the speech habits of pupils, to see how those speech habits pattern in respect to the practices of our social dialects, are English teachers equipped to deal with these problems of their profession.¹²⁸

Pooley considered the first task "of the secondary school which is the function of teachers of English" to be "the teaching of communication, which means the arts and the responsibilities of shared expression." As a criticism of the method of teaching English usage which is too often used by English teachers, he added:

So long as we interpret this task as the mere teaching of grammar out of textbooks and usage drills out of workbooks, we deserve to have it taken away from us; for anyone can teach drills and exercises.¹²⁹

As has been mentioned before, these situations seem

¹²⁸Fries, "Educational Pressures and Our Problems," p. 13.

¹²⁹Pooley, "English in the Coming High School," p. 288.

to be due primarily to one thing: the teachers have not been properly trained to fulfill their mission. As Hach stated:

Colleges, too, particularly teacher-training institutions, must accept some responsibility for many of our graduates' deplorable composition because many of them have not prepared prospective teachers, even English majors, to teach composition.¹³⁰

Neville has been aware of this problem for many years and even in 1940 made a proposal to remedy the situation:

. . . I know that the teacher must be able to do these things [to say, hear, read, and write a plain thing in a plain way] before he can teach his pupils to do them, but I also know that he will never accept the responsibility until teachers in training in liberal-arts colleges and in colleges of education assume a more intelligent attitude toward the teaching and learning process, and until a course in English as a function of school life is part of the preparation of all prospective teachers regardless of their specialties.¹³¹

In a later article Neville made more specific recommendations which should, if accepted and practiced, greatly enhance the development of students' linguistic abilities in a very real way. He stated that teachers of English:

. . . must advocate that all preparing teachers be given satisfying and thorough courses in speech, in written composition, and in that literature which is significant for the children they are to teach.¹³²

He went on to explain that if all teachers were thus prepared, then:

¹³⁰Clarence W. Hach, "Needed: A Sequential Program in Composition," The English Journal, XLIX (November, 1960), 537.

¹³¹Neville, "As We Review Unification," pp. 486-87.

¹³²Neville, "Let Us Be Sensible," p. 140.

. . . Every teacher would know about the skills and techniques for reading in his particular area and would teach them; . . . Every teacher who called for writing in his area would know something about written composition; therefore, he would be qualified to direct the writing activities of his students. Every teacher would have a fairly good literature background and would see the importance of literature as a motivating force in his courses. No longer would the teacher of English be the sole custodian of student literature experiences. Every teacher would be able to speak clearly and effectively according to the dictates of contemporary good usage and would be an example to his students.¹³³

Zahner made a statement that seems to be a fit ending to this particular discussion as advice to any teacher:

. . . This seems to me to be the conclusion of the whole matter: try to teach them so to control language that experience, reality as it is given us to know it, is not mutilated in its precarious passage through words.¹³⁴

There was one general remedy suggested in much of the literature on this topic which this writer noticed in particular. It is considered as "general" since various writers obviously had various attitudes about it. Various aspects of the idea have appeared before in this study, and so it is no new idea. Stated in general terms, the remedy is this: Since the use of the English language is not confined to the English class, but is a "condition" of each student's school life, as well as his home life, why should the instruction and guidance of its proper usage be left to only one period

¹³³Ibid.

¹³⁴Zahner, "The Teaching of Language," p. 458.

per day, in the hands of only one of the many teachers with whom the student has contact? Rather, since the research shows that language is learned by example, not by instruction or drill, every adult, particularly every educator, has a responsibility to see that the example he sets for the younger generations is an example that will aid the student in developing his facility to understand and to be understood in his communication with others. This may be called "all-school English."

Pooley, in his article on the future American high school, foresaw as a second great change (the first being the previously mentioned elimination of the grade placement system) "a sweeping curriculum revision based on the principle of unifying rather than of diversifying educational experience."¹³⁵ He went on to state that:

. . . Somehow we must find the pattern for bringing things together into meaningful wholes rather than separating them out into more and more specialized segments. In short, a revolutionary rebuilding of the secondary-school curriculum is called for in which the foundational principle is not what subjects shall be taught but what total educational experiences will be of greatest profit to the various kinds of students who come to high school.¹³⁶

This suggestion is not, of course, specifically advocating the idea of "all-school English," but it clearly expresses

¹³⁵Pooley, "English in the Coming High School," p. 286.

¹³⁶Ibid., p. 287.

one of the purposes of such an English program.

Sampson may not have originated the idea of all-school English, but he was a strong advocate of it and did much to further the cause. He stated:

. . . Teachers seem to think that it is always some other person's work to look after English. But every teacher is a teacher of English because every teacher is a teacher in English. That sentence should be written in letters of gold over every school doorway. Teachers are very specially the official guardians of the English language. We cannot give a lesson in any subject without helping or neglecting the English of our pupils.¹³⁷

Sampson's concern that every teacher take great care in seeing that each student's language ability grows apace with his knowledge in other areas is more understandable in view of the immense significance which he said English holds for all other areas:

. . . Upon the foundation of a sound education in English any future fabric of art, language, science, philosophy, commerce or mechanics can be firmly erected. Without that foundation nothing can be firmly erected.¹³⁸

Another publication of about the same time as Sampson's book elaborated upon the subject. This publication was not compiled by one person, but represented the thoughts of committee of learned people. It was stated that:

. . . The teaching of English as the instrument of thought and the means of communication will necessarily

¹³⁷Sampson, "English for the English," p. 28.

¹³⁸Ibid., p. 120.

affect the teaching of every other subject. Whatever view is taken of specialisation in schools, it is evidently desirable that the general education of every teacher shall be sufficiently good to ensure unceasing instruction in the English language. The teachers of all special subjects must be responsible for the quality of the English spoken or written during their lessons. In every department of school work confused and slovenly English must be regarded as the result of a failure on the part of the teacher.¹³⁹

It would appear, however, that such recommendations and statements have been mainly overlooked by the average teacher and administrator, and, most important of all, by teacher-training institutions. This seems true in view of the continuing necessity for energetic action on the part of such advocates of all-school English as Neville, who has proved the importance and practicality of all-school English in his work at the John Burroughs School in St. Louis. Neville stated that:

. . . When we establish as a fact that English does complement and improve teaching in all areas, we shall be able to emphasize another salient fact which is that English is the core of the curriculum, the social foundation of all education, including the social studies. . . . We are not primarily preparing all American youth or any American youth to earn a living. We are preparing them to be better human beings--and above that there is no higher calling.¹⁴⁰

Other leaders in the field of English teaching have emphasized the need either for other teachers' acceptance of

¹³⁹Henry Newbolt (Chairman), The Teaching of English in England, a Report of the Departmental Committee Appointed by the President of the Board of Education, etc. (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1921), pp. 23-24.

¹⁴⁰Neville, "The Art of Plain English," p. 76.

a proportionate share of the responsibility for the language education of their students (such as Mersand¹⁴¹) or for a closer working relationship between the English department and the other departments in a school. With regard to the latter suggestion, LaBrant, quoting the previously mentioned "Arkansas Plan," wrote:

. . . "In the very nature of the subject, English occupies a unique position in the school. It will function best in co-operation with other departments. The basis for this co-operation is faculty study. Decision in the matter of which cue to follow and what problem to take from another department is difficult and cannot be worked out in advance. A closer contact of the English group with other departments is highly desirable and is implied in the report of the English committee. When schools decide that they want this new English program, they must realize that certain changes in departmental attitudes should come. Selection of units of work will come through careful faculty and administrative study of the problem."¹⁴²

Although Carpenter, Baker, and Scott advocated that every teacher be responsible for the language development of students, especially in the area of composition ("Is it the business of any one teacher to give instruction in composition? Is it not rather the duty and privilege of all?"¹⁴³), they also presented some of the main arguments against such

¹⁴¹Joseph Mersand, "What Has Happened to Written Composition?" The English Journal, L (April, 1961), 231-37.

¹⁴²LaBrant, "New Programs in Arkansas," pp. 650-51.

¹⁴³Carpenter, Baker, and Scott, op. cit., p. 230.

an idea and some of the reasons such a plan might not be successful:

First, what is everybody's business is nobody's business. The proper results would--through indifference, indolence, or sheer lack of time and strength on the part of teachers and pupils--simply not be secured at all. Second, there is, sad to say, good reason for believing that in far too many cases some teachers do use better English than others, and that a great number do not use good English at all. Third, even if all teachers were equal in this capacity, all would scarcely be equal in the peculiar characteristics that distinguish the good teacher of composition.¹⁴⁴

Much of this argument is not valid now, however, since these factors could be controlled to a great extent in the teacher-training institutions. If prospective teachers were trained to accept language responsibilities the attitudes which prevail today would no doubt greatly change, since much of the reluctance on the part of other teachers to take these responsibilities stems from their own feelings of inadequacy in language usage. Carpenter, Baker, and Scott went on to propose, however, that:

. . . The teachers in a secondary school should by solemn compact bind themselves to foster in every way the use of good English in all classrooms. Under this agreement they would discourage slovenly or incorrect pronunciation and slipshod expression, and would absolutely decline to receive papers in which errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar are conspicuous, or to approve oral recitations in which the English is plainly bad. The dangers are: (1) that teachers will not take the trouble to meet together and discuss the matter carefully, to see just what they had best do;

¹⁴⁴Ibid., p. 231.

(2) that, because the pressure of time keeps them from doing all they want to do, they will decline to do anything; and (3) that some teachers who have hard and fast (and perhaps unscientific) ideas as to what is "correct" will strain over the minute and unimportant errors in idiom and let slip the opportunity to scotch the really vicious practices of thought and speech.¹⁴⁵

Again, the proper preparation of all teachers would answer the "dangers" mentioned above. As stated previously, an all-school English program was successfully carried out at the John Burroughs School and proves, at least, the possibility of such a program with properly oriented faculty and administrators. This remedy would seem the most practical, the most promising suggestion to cure the language ills of the country, yet at the same time, least likely to come about in the near future. LaBrant's challenge to all educators, made in 1940, is still very applicable today and should be heeded:

American education is making desperate efforts to produce a citizenry broadminded, generous in sympathy and understanding, critical in its thinking, active in problem solving. The undertaking calls for the best that can be done. This is no time for narrow classifications, for wrangling over the question of whether this is your job or mine. It is, on the other hand, a time for every individual in a school system to contribute his best to the education of children. "The old order changeth" and with it we too must change.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 231-32.

¹⁴⁶Lou LaBrant, "Library Teacher or Classroom Teacher?" The Phi Delta Kappan, XXII (February, 1940), 291.

CHAPTER III

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

I. SUMMARY

Instruction in the use of the English language, possibly the most important single purpose of the school curriculum, is also an area beset with many problems. Many of these problems, both of method and of content, are the result of the misunderstanding in the past of the true nature and structure of English. This study has investigated the development of English grammar from the early Latinate form to the present structural linguistic attitudes with the intention of discovering which basic concepts have changed, which have not, what modern research shows to be the truth about our language, and how this evolutionary process has affected the teaching of English in schools today at the secondary level. This was done by reviewing and analyzing a representative sampling of textbooks of various periods in the history of English grammar, several authoritative books on the subject, and a wide variety of periodical articles.

In reviewing and analyzing the related literature the first aspect considered was proof of the existence of a problem or problems. The increasing number of people attending college has brought out the fact that the ability to use the

English language properly or with facility is greatly lacking in many high school graduates. This same fact has made itself evident in the business world, also, and it has even caused serious concern at the top level of our national government. The criticism has been concerned mainly with the content of the English program and with the methods of teaching. The problems of teaching English have been credited to textbooks, administrators, the communities, colleges and universities (teacher-training institutions in particular), and on the teachers themselves.

Secondly, the history or the evolution of English grammar was traced from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries during which English grammar, when it was taught, was taught according to the rules of Latin. When English did not fit the rules, the language was blamed, not the rules. Though the Latin influence still remains in some aspects of the traditional teaching of English today, the scientific movement in education, which became a strong force in the nineteenth century, gradually weakened this influence. At the turn of the century, with the emphasis on the practical aspects of education, a functional concept of grammar teaching developed and expanded to influence writers and educators. It seems doubtful, however, that many teachers changed their traditional methods, probably due in part, at least, to the simultaneous increase of duties and pupils. One of

the main points of this section was that the concepts of English and even English itself have continued to change through the centuries, despite the best efforts of the traditionalists to "fix" them.

Quite logically, the discussion of the evolution of English grammar and methods of teaching were followed by a discussion of the current situation. This included mention of the ways in which the language is learned, which seemed to be synonymous in many cases with ways in which the language is used. Both these categories culminated in the area termed "general social interaction." A question which was concerned in this discussion was "Whose responsibility is it to develop the student's language abilities?" The answer to this, for the school program, was that every teacher has a share of the responsibility. Other areas in which there seems to be a lack were discussed, such as teachers' methods, the use of textbooks, repetition of material, and the gap between what is taught and what should be taught.

The status of structural linguistics in the current situation was considered along with the results of modern linguistic science. The scientific facts indicated little or no practical value in the traditional methods of teaching grammar, though these facts have found little favor with a majority of the writers of English grammar textbooks, the most conservative books being those for college classes.

Since the turn of this century and even before, leaders in the field of English teaching have made proposals for solving the many problems which face the educator concerning the use of the English language. The fourth aspect considered in reviewing and analyzing related literature was that of proposed remedies for the problems. The importance of an ability to think, written composition, creative writing, a learning experience, the students' needs, the grade system, and the pupil's own level of understanding was emphasized and discussed in terms of proposals made concerning these aspects by leaders in the field. The relation of teaching methods to learning experiences in English was considered and specific proposals were reviewed. The advantage of the descriptive methods over the prescriptive was shown and substantiated, as was the teachers' inability or unwillingness to utilize the findings of linguistic science in their teaching methods. The responsibility for this attitude seemed to rest primarily with the institutions which train the teachers.

Much of the evidence in the proposals considered indicated that many of the problems now existing in the English program would be eliminated if not only the English teacher but every other teacher and administrator were responsible for the development of the language abilities of each pupil. The evidence for this idea, as well as some against it was examined. The advantages to be gained by such an "all-school"

English program would appear to outweigh any disadvantages by far, as was shown by the program at the John Burroughs School in the 1940's. The only problems involved are those of initiating the program in a given school system and, more important, in the teacher-training institutions, where all prospective teachers would need adequate language training.

II. CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions which are drawn from this study follow:

1. English is a dynamic language, and therefore is constantly changing.
2. The efforts of traditional or prescriptive English grammarians to "fix" the language by a rigid set of rules have had little effect on the language itself or on how it is spoken.
3. Prescriptive methods, such as parsing, workbook drill, and the like, are nearly useless for all practical purposes in English language education, and, in many instances, detrimental to the learning situation.
4. Language habits are learned, for the most part, in the home and in the elementary school. Thus, the language problems encountered by the secondary school teacher are fairly deeply ingrained by the time students come under their guidance.

5. The findings of research in linguistic science have been largely ignored by most teachers of English and writers of grammar textbooks, and by teacher-training institutions. Teachers, even English teachers, have not received training which would enable them to adequately cope with the language problems of their students.

6. Teaching method is one of the most important factors in determining the quality of a language program.

7. Teachers of English should not have all the responsibility for students' development of language abilities, but rather, through a radical revision of the present standard curriculum, every teacher should be responsible for the linguistic development of each student he teaches. Preparation for this responsibility should be provided by every teacher-training institution.

8. The English language is undeniably a condition of the lives of every student and teacher and must be treated as such.

9. Written composition should be an integral part of any program of instruction in the use of the English language.

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