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A Comparison of Persistent Errors in Written and Spoken English of a Number of Seventh and Eighth Grade Pupils of Douglas School, Greenville, Texas

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A COMPARISON OF PERSISTENT ERRORS
IN
WRITTEN AND SPOKEN ENGLISH
OF
A NUMBER OF SEVENTH AND EIGHTH GRADE PUPILS
OF
DOUGLAS SCHOOL, GREENVILLE, TEXAS

BY

Mary Jim Morris

A Thesis in English Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of
the Requirements for The Degree of
Bachelor of Arts
in the
Division of Arts and Sciences
of the
Prairie View State Normal and Industrial College
Prairie View, Texas

July, 1934

C O N T E N T S

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

This report has been prepared to determine or bring out the relationship of oral and written English.

This report will try to find out whether a pupil who makes a great number of errors in speaking does the same in his writing.

The main reason for studying this problem is the prevalence of serious grammatical errors made in both writing and speaking. A child learns to speak before he learns to write. He gets his speech from those about him. It is possible that speech makes a deep impression on written English. If this is true, we want to find how far the influence extends.

So far as we know bibliographical material is not to be had. A study of this problem was made at Prairie View College by Miss M. L. Glossom, and a report made of her study in May, 1934.

If there is found to be a correlation between spoken and written English, a knowledge of the fact may help to solve the problem of some difficulties in written English.

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A comparison is placing two things side by side to bring out their relative merits, because of a real or imagined similarity. Persistent errors are errors that have staying qualities; they are obstinate. The definition is simply finding the words that are not correctly used by children in speech and writing, and placing them side by side to find their relative merits.

The first thing I did was to have Dr. C. N. Franklin make a health survey of the pupils of Douglas school. This examination was financed by the Idle Hour Club, one of the ladies' clubs of the city.

Many things were found that would make a child dull, but could not affect him so much as to make him commit errors in speech.

I visited the homes of the children in different sections to find out the condition of their home life. I found that the children living in the squalid settlements, and those living in the slums used the worst English spoken in school. There were some cultured families living there on account of economical reasons. I found

the children of these cultured families made few errors in speech, except slang. They had as great a supply of that in their vocabularies as any other child that lived in the slums.

I began to take account of the errors found in a group of thirty-three children from the seventh and eighth grades. I counted the errors and found eighty grammatical errors, not counting slang and vocalizing pauses, as these two kinds of errors do not enter into the written work. All errors fell into five divisions of written errors. These classes were as follows:

Double negative--

I didn't do nothing, for
I did not do anything.

Misused adjectives and adverbs--

He is the largest of the two boys, for
He is the larger of the two boys.
The flowere smell sweetly, for
The flowers smell sweet.

Misused pronouns--

Give me them books, for
Give me those books.
Each of the boys did their work, for
Each of the boys did his work.
It was me, for
It was I.

Redundancy--

Washington he crossed over into Penn-
sylvania.

Misused verb--

- (a) Incorrect verb: She set down; for
She sat down.
- (b) Incorrect tense form: I seen her, for
I saw her.
- (c) Incorrect number: He write, for
He writes.

Two records were kept for the five divisions of errors. One was kept for oral and one for written speech.

Students were selected from the seventh and eighth grades. There were twenty-three eighth grade, and ten seventh grade students.

The material used for detecting errors in speech was The Literary Digest, Treasure Island, Wheeler's Literary Reader--Book Seven, Christmas Carol and Growth of a Nation. The written work was taken from Smith's English Grammar and Treasure Island.

The oral errors were taken while the children were reading or reciting, and on the play ground. The children knew they were marked for errors. Perhaps this made them more careful than they would have been, they were on their guard.

The work of observation extended from January, 1934 to May 1934.

The errors were counted and compared.

The two chief errors were in the class of misused verbs in some form, and change of tense. There were

misused verbs as--

I set on the porch.
I laid on the bed and went to sleep.
I sat one glass on the table.

The outstanding errors of incorrect tense were--

Have you saw my book?
I seen him yesterday.

Some examples of incorrect use in number were--

He go to school every day.
They recites well.
Every body love her.

The next greatest number of errors fell under the misuse of adjectives and adverbs as--

It is kind of cold today.
He sort of fooled me.

The double negative was used one hundred and fifty-four times in speech, and used forty times in the written work. The common errors were--

I didn't do nothing to him.
I haven't got no pencil.
I didn't say nothing.

These errors are given because they are recorded so many times in the oral work and in the written also.

EXPLANATION OF RESULTS

CHAPTER II

The conclusions of this survey are shown on the following graphs. The greatest number of errors in both speech and writing result from misused verbs.

Graph number one shows the errors made in speech. The result was reached by adding the number of times each pupil made the same error.

The highest point on the graph is the misused verb. The next highest point is the misuse of adjectives and adverbs. Errors are classified in the graph as, Double negative, Change of tense, Redundancy, Misuse of adjectives and adverbs, and Misused verbs.

Graph number two shows the mistakes made in written work. The errors of the same kind were added and classified in the same order as the first graph. The frequency of errors reaches the highest point at the misused verb and the lowest point at the double negative. The line varies more than the one showing oral errors. This shows a greater variation in the written work than in the oral. This can be seen by the following table average--

	<u>ORAL ERRORS</u>	<u>WRITTEN ERRORS</u>
Double Negative	26	7
Change of Tense	43	32
Redundancy	45	20
Misused Adjective and Adverb	58	27
Misuse of Verbs	120	51

Each square represents six points. The line for the oral errors was on an increase, while the line of the written errors had a tendency to rise and fall.

Graph number three shows a comparison of oral and written graphs one and two. The heavy black line represents the oral errors, and the red line the written errors. This graph shows that the greatest difference in the errors made was in the misuse of the verb, this being 69 points higher in the oral than in the written errors. The misused adjectives and adverbs are 31 points higher in the oral than in the written. Redundancy is 25 points higher in the oral than in the written work, change of tense is 11 points higher in the oral, than written, and double negative reaches 19 points higher in oral than in the written.

Graph number four shows the specific errors as they occurred orally. The classification of errors is given in the same order as in the preceding graph. This graph shows the highest point reached in errors is the misused verb. The lowest point reached is the use of the double negative. The errors which occurred in the other cases

were closely connected.

Graph number five is showing the specific errors made in written work. The classifications are the same as the preceding graphs. The lines have a tendency to vary more than in number four. The highest point is the misused verb, while the double negative almost reaches zero.

Graph number six shows the comparison of graphs four and five. The heavy black line shows the oral errors; the red line shows the written ones. There is only slight variation. The misused verb still holds the highest place and the double negative the lowest.

I also found that children living in low housing will have persistent errors that children living in an other do not have.

I observed that more errors were made in writing than in writing.

There were few errors recorded in the dictations that were more written errors than oral ones. These had not been taught in private schools, they had been learned in an exclusive neighborhood among children who read well and recited well. This error was common in their written work but not in oral. "I don't know how it sounds when I write." The first one, the first one

C O N C L U S I O N

CHAPTER III

From observation I found that there had been made an average of 86 oral errors and the same errors averaged 25 when they appeared in writing. These mistakes fall under five divisions--

	<u>ORAL</u>	<u>WRITTEN</u>
Double Negative	154	40
Misused Adjective and Adverb	350	162
Redundancy	266	120
Misused verb	720	304
Change of Tense	258	194

I also found that children living in one locality will have persistent errors that children living in another do not have.

I observed that more errors were made in speech than in writing.

There were two cases recorded out of thirty-three that made more written errors than oral ones. These two had been taught in private schools; they had been reared in an exclusive neighborhood among cultured people. They read well and recited well. When asked about errors in their written work one of them said, "I can't hear how it sounds when I write." The fact was, they had not

been taught forms and uses of words. They had not been taught to choose the correct forms of speech and to acquire an effective use of them. They had all the definitions, but were not able to fix in their minds the relations and correct forms of speech.

I found from the survey that there is a correlation between speech and writing, that speech influences writing. I observed that children's speech comes from what they hear. Their speech soon becomes a habit. Whether good or bad, it reflects in their writing. This argues for the fact, that children should have teachers that are careful to speak correctly, as children record every word.

To tell how much speech influences writing, cannot be done until several children of different sections be taken, and a careful, scientific survey be made on the subject. But we find that children who make a number of mistakes in speech make a great number in writing, and that there are more errors made in the use of the verb than any other.

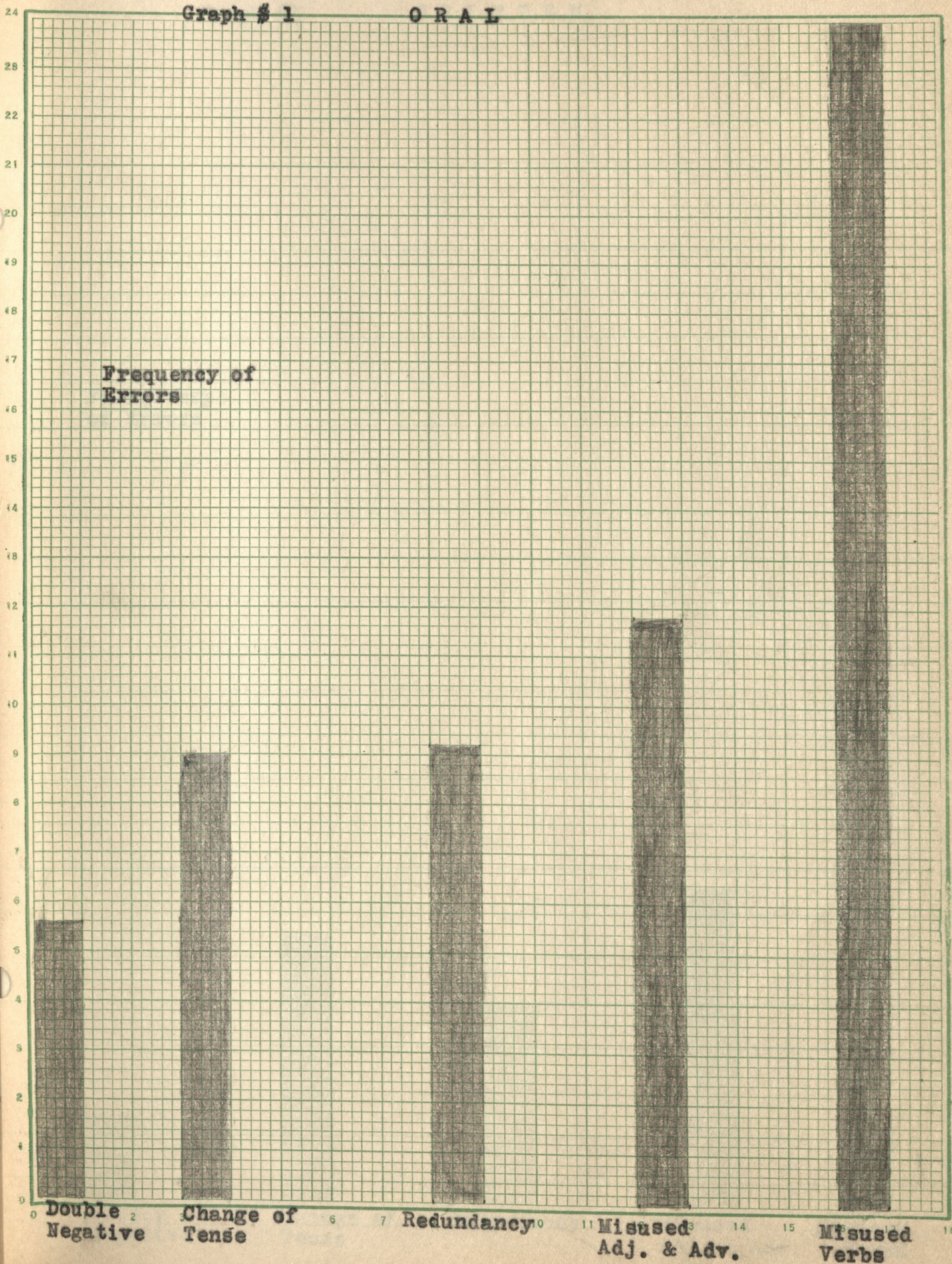
English is of no use without correct use of verbs. It is probable that this survey showing the weakest point to be the verb, may furnish a key to the teaching of English and that improvement of speech may be hoped for soon.

G R A P H S

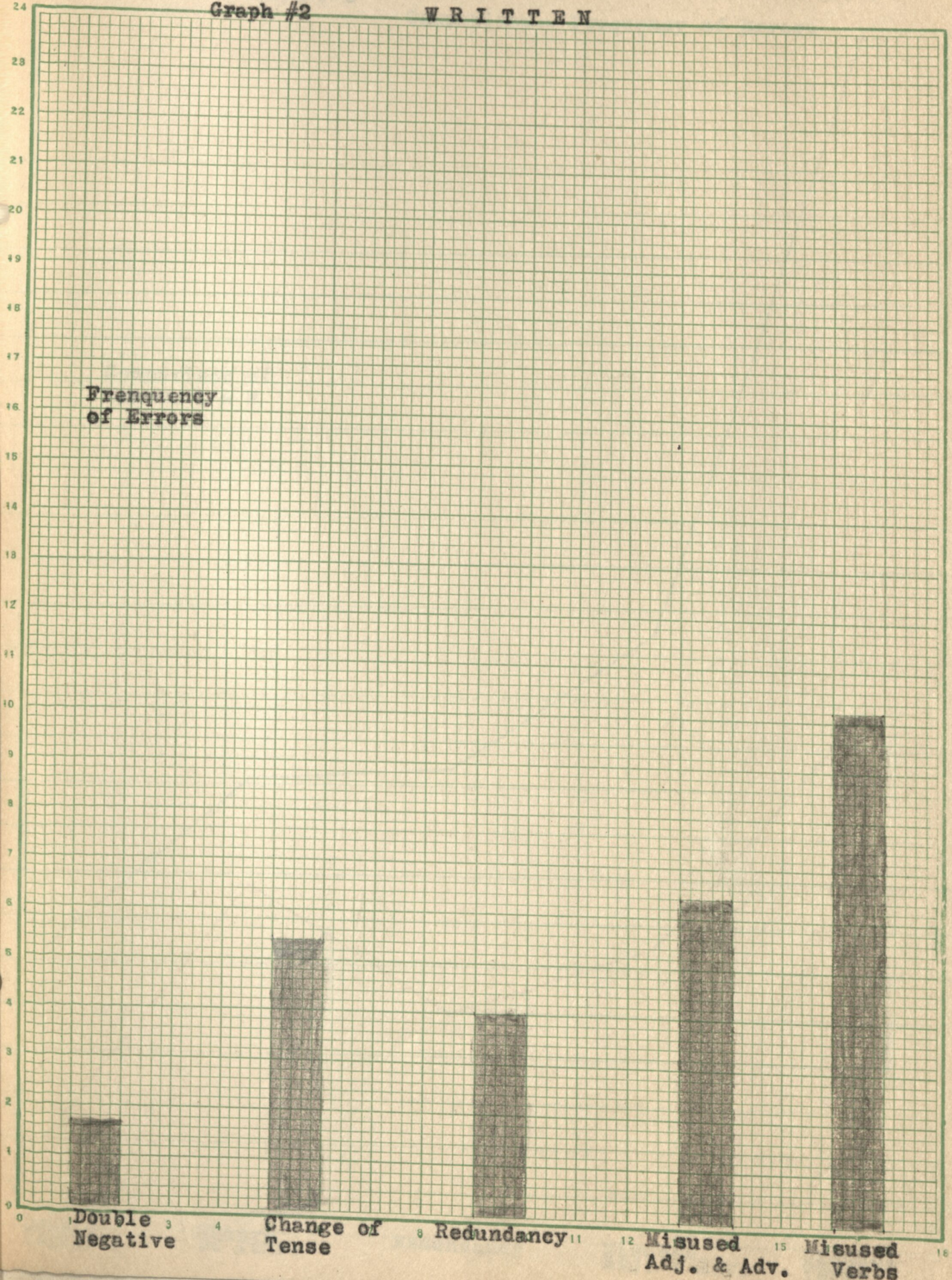
Graph # 1

O R A L

Frequency of
Errors



Frequency
of Errors



Double Negative

Change of Tense

Redundancy

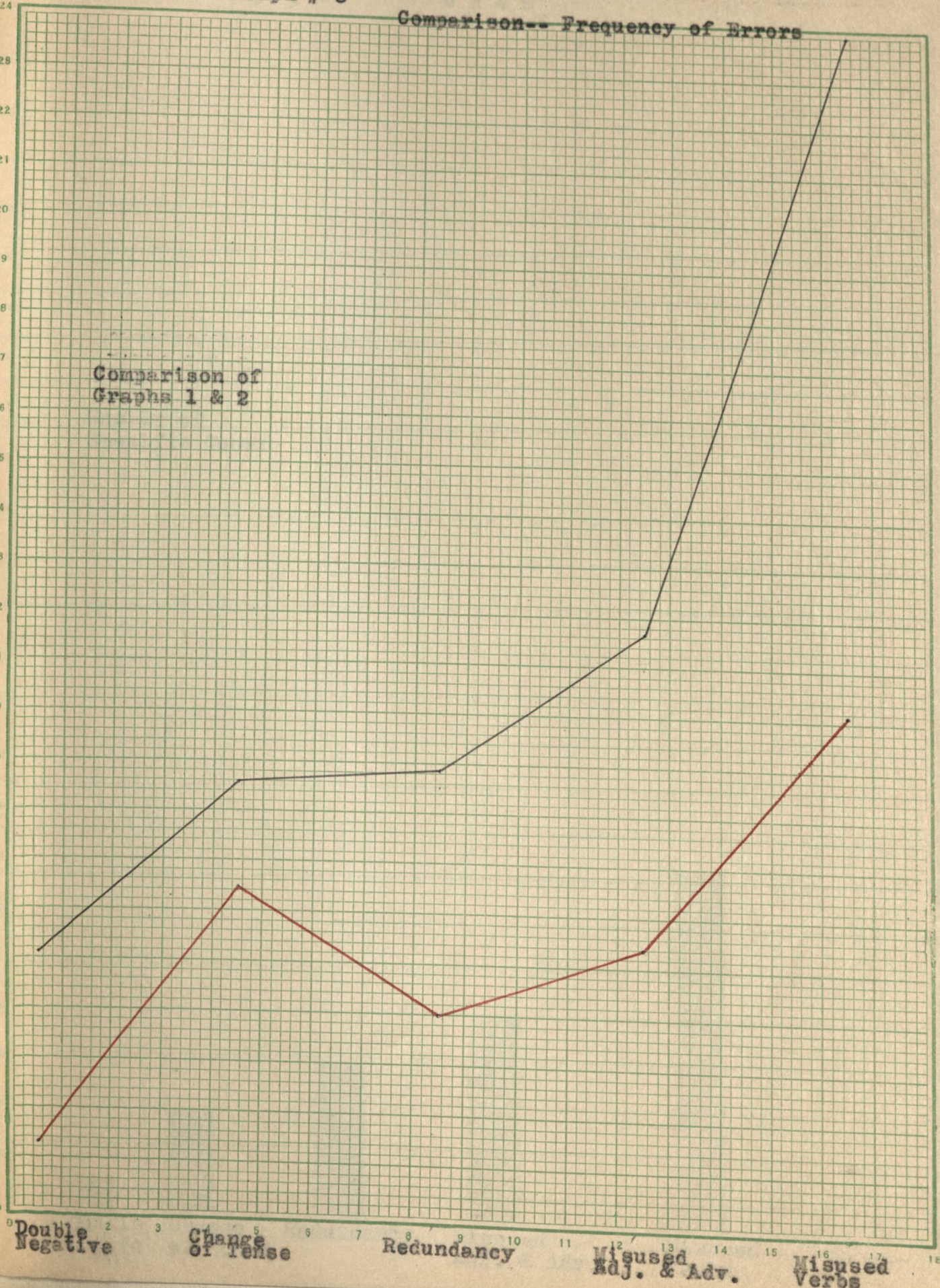
Misused Adj. & Adv.

Misused Verbs

Graph # 3

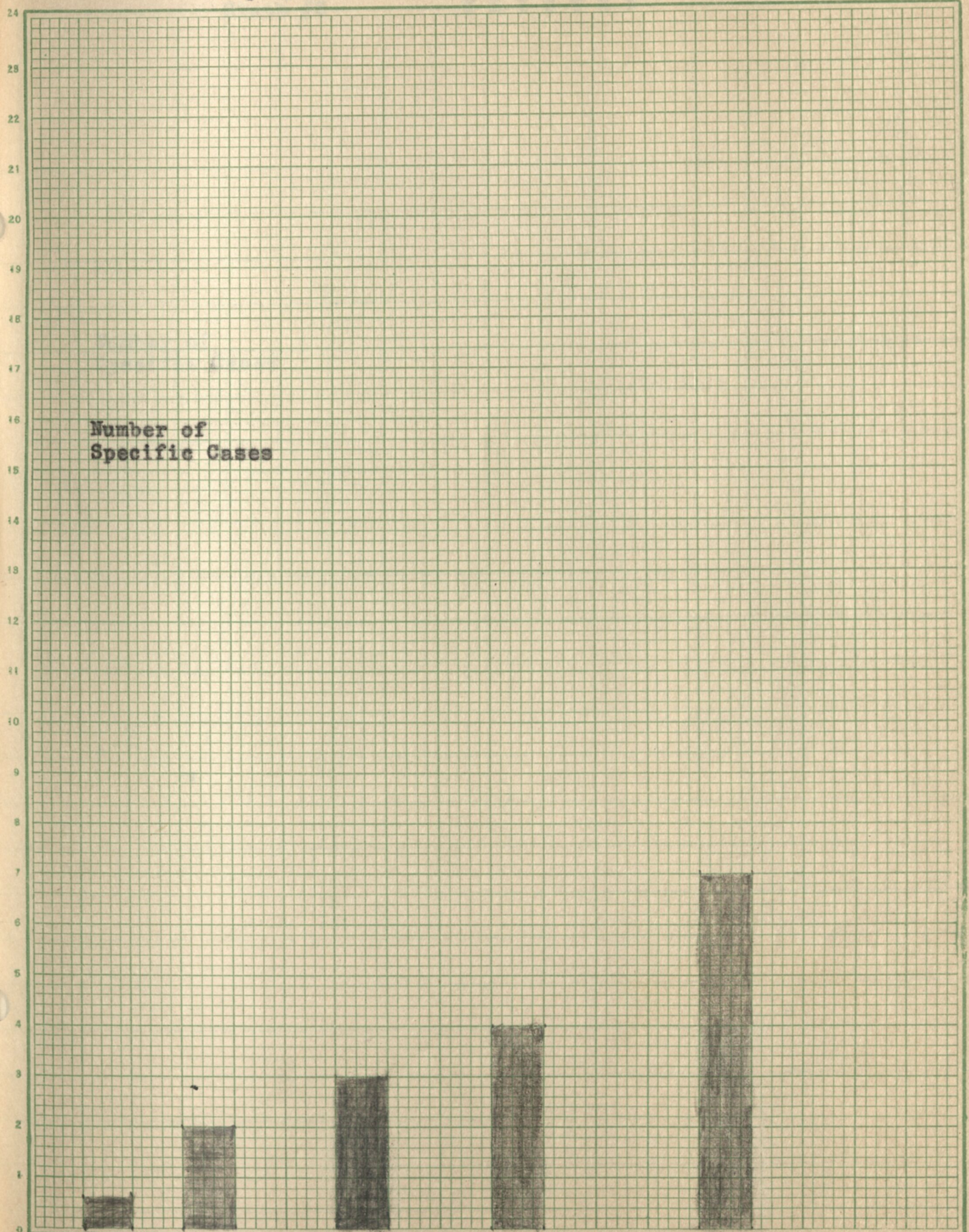
Comperison-- Frequency of Errors

Comparison of
Graphs 1 & 2

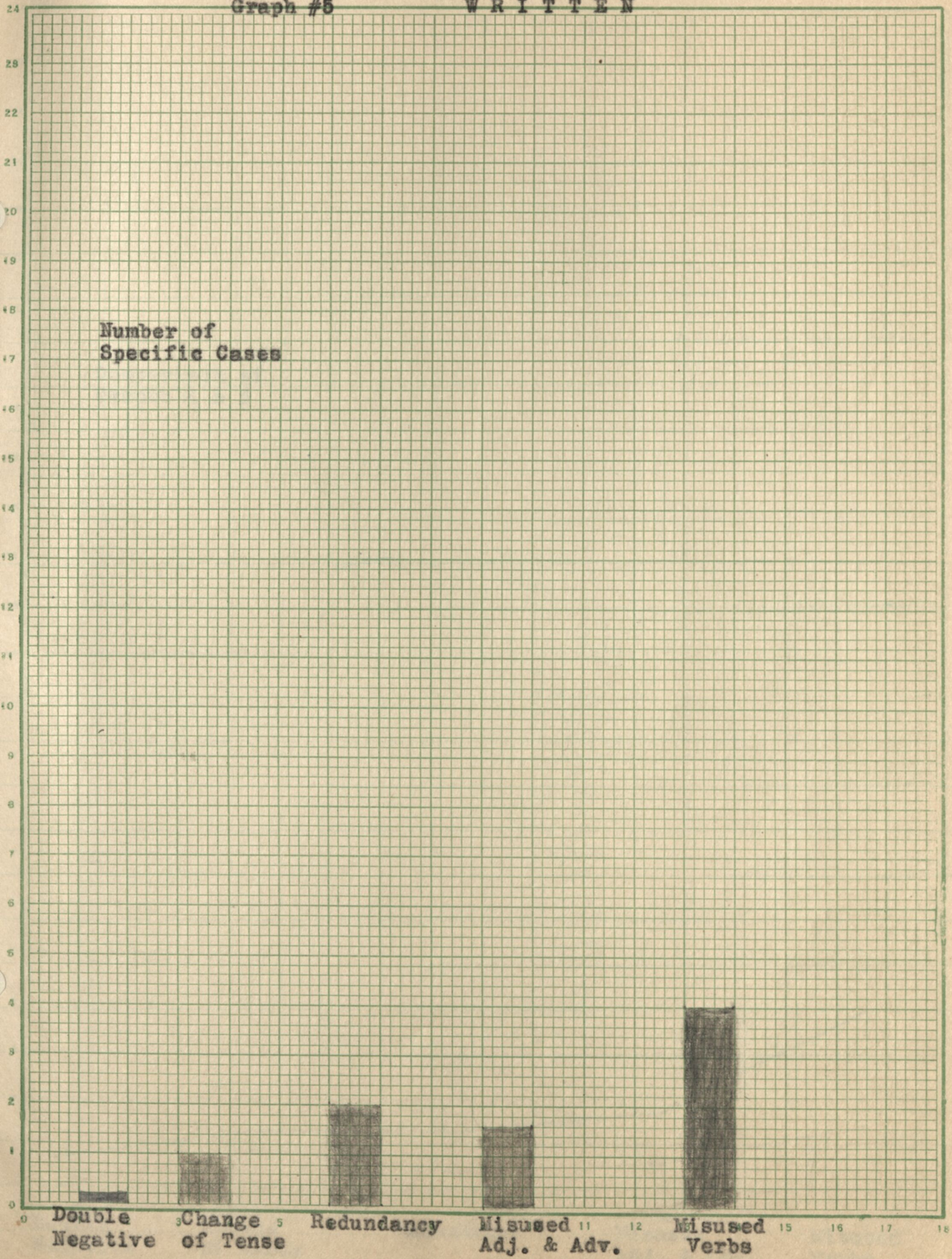


Number of
Specific Cases

Double Negative Change of Tense Redundancy Misused Adj. & Adv. Misused Verbs



Number of
Specific Cases



Graph # 6

Comparison of Specific Errors

Comparison of
Graphs 4 & 5

