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A STUDY OF FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR

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A STUDY OF FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR

By

Willie Helen Carroll

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SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

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in the

DIVISION OF GRADUATE STUDY

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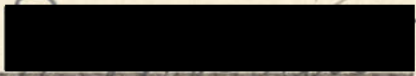
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Date

August, 1947

Dedicated to my mother, Mrs. M. A. Carroll,
and my two nephews, Charles Adam Burks and
William Phillip Walton.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer wishes to express her grateful appreciation to the 50 teachers who furnished data upon which this study is based. She is particularly indebted to Miss E. A. Offutt whose constant guidance and generous help conveyed the entire work to its completion. Special acknowledgement is also due Dr. J. M. Drew whose encouragement has been most helpful.

BIOGRAPHY

The writer was born in Richland, Texas on March 21, 1920, the fourth daughter to Mr. and Mrs. A. I. Carroll. In 1925 her family moved to Waco, Texas where she attended the public schools and Paul Quinn College. She graduated from Paul Quinn College in 1941.

In September, 1941 the writer was employed as teacher of intermediate grades at Thornton Colored School, Thornton, Texas. In 1943 she came to Prairie View College to serve as Secretary to Master Project Number 14, NYA. This project was liquidated in August of that year and in October she began her employment as Secretary to the Principal of Prairie View College. At present she is secretary to the Principal Emeritus of Prairie View College, Mr. W. R. Banks.

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CHAPTER I
THE PROBLEM

In keeping with the trend in American education to revise the curriculum, English teachers have been interested in preparing students to meet the demands of our present society. Within the last thirty-five years the teaching of English has shown signs of definite progress. Hatfield¹ has surmised that the over-all trend in the teaching of English may be expected to continue.

There has been more discussion about the teaching of grammar than any other phase of the English curriculum and although this subject has been carefully studied, there is still much controversy as to the place it should occupy in a teaching program. Quite frequently such questions have been asked as :

1. Should grammar be included in our school curriculum? If so, what kind of grammar should be taught?
2. How much grammar is needed for a child to speak and write correctly the English language?
3. Should grammar be taught separately or in connection with some other course?

1. R. Hatfield, "Changes in the Curriculum", The Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, XXX (1946), p. 1.

4. Does formal grammar have any value in promoting correct speech habits?

5. Does a knowledge of grammar function in the everyday life of a child?

These questions have been given much study and numerous answers have been given. Blaisdell¹ thinks formal grammar should be taught in the junior high school because students cannot understand it before this time. Fairley² believes the study of formal grammar is almost valueless so far as the teaching of correct speech is concerned. Shreve³ is of the opinion that formal grammar has no immediate transfer value as far as applied grammar is concerned. Wilson⁴ insists that grammar should be taught in the high schools but the methods used should be changed.

The various opinions given have had little effect in solidifying the opposing schools of grammar. At present there continues to be doubt in the minds of many teachers as to what should be included in a program of English grammar. The core of the whole problem lay in the opposition to formal grammar which is defined by Moore⁵ as "grammar highly organized and taught as a strict science, chiefly

1. T. Blaisdell, Ways to Teach English, p. 212.

2. Edwin Fairley, "The Question of Formal Grammar", Educational Administration and Supervision, II (1916), p.181.

3. F. Shreve, Psychology of the Teaching of English, p.122.

4. Emma J. Wilson, "Shall We Abolish Formal Grammar?", English Journal, VI (1917), p. 308.

5. E. C. Moore, Minimum Course of Study, p. 178.

for its own sake or as a discipline of the mind." The trend at present is definitely toward teaching functional grammar. The problem arises what should be included in a program of functional grammar. Pooley¹ says, "there is almost complete agreement that something should be done about grammar, but an almost fantastic disagreement as to what that something should be."

A group of persons who may be called functionalists have attempted to free the teaching of grammar of traditions which have been imposed upon it from its beginnings. They believe the subject is worthy of being retained in the English curriculum, but they believe the methods of teaching the subject should be in keeping with modern trends. Within the last three decades progress in the methods of teaching have been improved tremendously. In fact, the perspective of the field has been broadened. Hatfield² has made the following observation:

We (teachers of English) have moved from the academic and bookish to the social and human, from the esoteric to the everyday, from the theoretical to the practical, from preparation for adult living to assistance in present adolescent living. We seem to be headed in the right direction. Let's keep marching.

The problem of this investigation may be stated thus: To what extent is functional grammar taught in the four year Negro accredited high schools of Texas today?

1. Hatfield, Op. Cit., p. 45.

2. Ibid., p. 10.

This question gives rise to the following subordinate questions:

1. What are the common errors made by high school students of Texas?
2. Will a study of functional grammar assist in the correction of these errors?
3. If so, what should a program of functional grammar include?

The writer believes a study of this kind is valuable because it will focalize attention on the points of greatest need in grammar. It will also eliminate waste of time in the teaching program. The teacher who knows the major types of errors made by students can concentrate on the correction of those errors. Since grammar has ceased to be taught for the sake of grammar itself, any value it may have depends entirely upon its effect on the written and spoken language of the student.

The writer offers no proof that a knowledge of functional grammar will insure correct speech. Although a number of studies have been made which prove formal grammar to be valueless, no studies have been made which proved definitely the value of functional grammar in preventing grammatical errors. It is the belief of the writer of this manuscript that a study of functional grammar will tend to make a student conscious of errors he makes and will make him put forth every effort to pre-

vent repeating the errors. If functional grammar achieves this purpose, it will fully justify its inclusion in the secondary school curriculum.

CHAPTER II

SCOPE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Before discussing the importance of functional grammar, the writer thinks it appropriate to give some background information on the history of the subject and its importance in the secondary school curriculum.

As far back as history records grammar has been a school subject. It was taught in Athens during the time of Pericles, Aristotle and Plato. The grammar of that period was much more inclusive than modern grammar because it included not only the forms of language but a study of literature as well. Possibly the most important writer of Roman education was Quintilian (35 A. D. - 95 A. D.). In his Institutes of Oratory he praised grammar as the foundation study in the schools.

It was during the Middle Ages that grammar was most highly esteemed. It was also during this period that it reached its highest degree of formalism. The language of the church and court was Latin; therefore, all studies were in Latin. During this period education was a form of discipline with no desire to fit men to meet the needs of their everyday lives.

The most popular textbook at this time, which consisted of questions and answers, was written by Donatus

about 400. The popularity of this book is seen when the length of time it was used is noted - one thousand years.

That grammar was considered an important subject is expressed by Rhabanus Maurus¹, Archbishop of Mainz, who comments,

..... grammar is the source and foundation of the liberal arts. It should be taught in every Christian school since the art of writing and speaking correctly is attained through it. How could one understand the sense of the spoken word or the meaning of letters and syllables, if one had not learned this before from grammar? How should one learn to know the articulation of discourse, the advantage of figurative language, the laws of word formation, and the correct forms of words, if one had not familiarized himself with the art of grammar?

The decline in popularity of the grammar of Donatus made it necessary to write a Latin grammar in England in the 16th Century. The author of the first Latin grammar written in English was William Lily. His book was called Lily's Latin Grammar, or the Grammar of Henry VIII, 1512, and it was as important and popular to new English scholars as Donatus's had been prior to this time. In 1542 this grammar was republished under the title of A Short Introduction to Grammar and as late as 1726 John Ward edited an edition which was published in England. Lily's book is noteworthy because it broke the old system of Latin and proved that English was a study of itself. It came to be the center of interest. Cross² makes the following

1. E. A. Cross, Fundamentals in English, p. 253.
2. Ibid.

statement relative to Lily's book:

From that day forward English gradually, but very slowly indeed, made its way to the front as the language of schools and opened up for the schoolboy not only the literature of his native tongue but in time the history, mathematics, and science that are the core of the liberal curricula of the modern school.

The first English grammar written in English, 1640, was 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. Although modelled after Latin grammars the author did not attempt to invent parallels in English to correspond to every item in Latin as had been done previously. This grammar treated the alphabet, parts of speech and syntax. Records reveal that at no time was this book used in any school.

In the 18th Century such persons as John Brightland, publisher of A Grammar of the English Tongue in 1706, Thomas Dilworth, author of A New Guide to the English Tongue, 1740, and Bishop Robert Lowth, author of A Short Introduction to Grammar, 1762, were quite popular. Grammars were very much in demand in England. Dilworth's book was popular because it was three textbooks in one and was cheap. The textbook that gained most popularity was A Short Introduction to English Grammar by Lowth. This book was the first to treat solely of grammar. Perhaps the most outstanding writer of this century was Samuel Johnson.

Johnson was the first president of Kings College author of the first grammar written by an American and published in America. His book was called First Easy Rudiments of Grammar, Applied to the English Tongue. The author was interested in "promoting good literature in America".¹

The first half of the 19th Century produced Lindley Murray. His first grammar, English Grammar, Adapted to the Different Classes of Learners, was published in York, England. Other writers of this century were: Caleb Bingham, Samuel Kirkham, Bullion, Samuel S. Green, Gould Brown, whose book, The Institutes of Grammar, Methodically Arranged, with Examples for Parsing, and False Syntax for Correcting, was sought by all persons interested in grammar. The book consisted of 1070 pages of text with twenty pages of introduction.

The grammars of John Brightland, Thomas Dilworth and Robert Lowth were sold in America before the Revolutionary War, beginning about 1750. The grammar of Samuel Johnson, although written and published in America in 1765, was not used in the American schools until about 1775. In 1789 Boston authorized the teaching of English Grammar and Composition. Between 1750 and 1775 approximately sixty private schools had begun to teach English Grammar.

1. Ibid., p. 259.

These schools were most popular in the middle colonies around Philadelphia where Franklin's academy was well esteemed.

According to Lyman¹ the teaching of grammar began around 1750 in the middle colonies, led by Philadelphia. It was the core study of an English program designed to fit students for practical life. Noteworthy persons in this movement were Hugh Jones, the first American grammarian; William Waterland, the first teacher of grammar in America; Benjamin Franklin, the projector of the model English program, and Samuel Johnson, the first president of Columbia and the first American to write a grammar published in America. He was also the first college official to put English on the same level with the classics in a college curriculum.

Until 1923 the methods of teaching grammar were by memorizing rules with the desire that they would be applied in speaking and writing. From 1823 to 1847 grammar was taught by having every word in the sentence parsed minutely. From 1847 to 1890 analysis in part took the place of elaborate parsing. During these years Henry Barnard and Horace Mann led a movement toward the inductive teaching of language through oral and written practice under guidance. The result of this movement was that be-

1. Ibid., p. 265

tween 1895 and 1905 systematic teaching of grammar was almost abandoned.

The methods of teaching grammar are reflected by Brown,¹ 1823, who says,

In etymology and syntax, he (the pupil) should be alternately exercised in learning small portions of his book, memorizing and then applying them in parsing, till the whole is rendered familiar.

Another comment is made by Rand² in the following statement:

In the period of my boyhood we had strange notions of the science of grammar. We did not dream of anything practical or applicable to the language we were using everyday till we had "been through" the grammar several times and parsed several months. Why? Because we were presented at once with a complete set of definitions and rules which might perplex a Murray or a Webster without any development of principles, any illustrations we could understand, any application of words to objects they represent. We supposed that the dogmas of our "gram books" were the invention of learned men, curious contrivances to carry the words of a sentence through a certain operation which we called parsing, rather for the gratification of curiosity than for any practical relief. The rule in grammar would parse the word as the rule in arithmetic would "do the sum" and "get the answer".

From this background information can be seen the progress made in teaching grammar over the centuries. It is deeply regretted that a few teachers still use the method of memorizing rules and parsing with no attempt to make them fit into the life of the child.

1. Ibid., p. 268.

2. Ibid.

This study is limited to the four year Negro high schools of Texas which are on the list of accredited schools released by the State Department of Education, Austin, Texas for the school year 1946-1947.

In an attempt to determine to what extent functional grammar is taught in the high schools of Texas a single method of investigation was used. This was a questionnaire which was sent to 115 of the English teachers of the four year accredited high schools of Texas, asking them to -

1. indicate the type of grammar taught and the grade level;
2. state which type was the more beneficial - functional or formal;
3. observe the written and spoken English of their students and list the errors made; and
4. based on the errors of students, suggest a program of functional grammar to meet their needs.

of the 115 teachers sent questionnaires only fifty replied. These errors have been classified and will be discussed in Chapter VII.

From the information given on the questionnaire it was also possible to determine what percent of the high school instructors teach functional and/or formal grammar. The investigation will reveal that there is little

uniformity along this line. Some teachers indicate that grammar is taught during the entire high school period, whereas other instructors teach grammar only two of the four year high school period.

Based on the errors made by their students, teachers were asked to give a suggested program of study to meet the needs of their particular students. These programs have been compiled into a suggested course of study of functional grammar.

In an attempt to note the trend toward functional grammar statements of various individuals, committees and associations who are interested in this field have been obtained.

CHAPTER III
OTHER RESEARCH STUDIES

The movement toward functional grammar grew out of a desire and determination to abolish formal methods of teaching this subject. The methods of teaching which have been described in the previous chapter were based on the belief that a knowledge of formal grammar accomplished the following aims:

1. Disciplined the mind
2. Was an aid to literary interpretation
3. Helped students write better compositions
4. Prepared students for a study of foreign languages
5. Provided knowledge of a desirable terminology

Early grammarians were not interested in what relation grammar had to the everyday speech or writing habits of a child. They were firm in their conviction that a study of grammar fulfilled the aims mentioned above until studies were made to discredit these contentions.

In 1906 Hoyt¹ made a study to test the reliability of the belief that grammar disciplines the mind. He devised three tests - one in grammar, one in composition, and one in ability to interpret a poem. These tests were adminis-

1. R. L. Lyman, Summary of Investigations Relating to Grammar, Language, and Composition, p. 21.

tered to two hundred ninth grade pupils in Indianapolis. Correlations for the tests were extremely low; between grammar and composition, .18; between grammar and interpretation, .21; between interpretation and composition, .28. The conclusion reached by Hoyt was that there is about the same relationship existing between grammar and composition and grammar and interpretation that exists between any two totally different subjects, as grammar and geography.

Rapeer¹ followed the methods used by Hoyt with a group of ninth grade pupils in Minneapolis and the results were even lower correlations: between grammar and composition, .23; between grammar and interpretation, .10; between interpretation and composition, .24.

These investigations were followed by Briggs's² experiment which attempted to determine the disciplinary value of formal grammar. Tests were administered to two seventh grades in the Horace Mann Schools of Teachers College, Columbia, and to pupils in five public schools in Illinois. These pupils were taught formal grammar for three months and composition and language for three months. At the end of the first three months when formal grammar was taught, the formal grammar group made an average score of 25.88 language group made an average score of 44.76.

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

The language group also showed slight superiority over the grammar group on all tests except in ability to see likenesses and differences.

Segal and Barr¹ gave a test in formal grammar and a test in applied grammar to more than one thousand sophomore and junior students in the senior high school in Long Beach, California. The test included one hundred items. Results of the tests were correlated in 304 cases. A summary of scores for the two groups revealed that the scores on the formal grammar test decreased while those on applied grammar test increased. The test proved that formal grammar was forgotten but that language use was improved. The conclusions were reached that (1) no more relationship exists between the two forms of grammar than there is on the average between any two of the high school subjects of any curriculum and (2) formal grammar has no immediate transfer value so far as applied English grammar is concerned.

William Asker² made a statistical comparison of knowledge of certain phases of formal grammar, ability to judge correctness of a sentence, and ability to use English as revealed through compositions. Four grammar tests were

1. David Segal and Nora A. Barr, "Relationship of Achievement in Formal Grammar and Achievement in Applied Grammar," Journal of Educational Research, XIV (1926), pp. 401-402.

2. William Asker, "Does A Knowledge of Formal Grammar Function?", School and Society, XVII (1922), p. 110.

given to 294 freshmen in the University of Washington. The relation between average scores in English tests and marks in composition and average marks in all subjects were determined. The author concluded that knowledge of formal grammar influences ability to judge the grammatical correctness of a sentence and ability in English composition only to a negligible degree.

Harry Rivlin¹ had 227 teachers of English rate the items of grammar according to the value of being functional and experts in the field rate the importance of the item. A comparison of group opinions revealed a likeness of the whole group. Items rated high on one group were rated high on the other and items rated low by one group were rated low by the other.

Stormzand and O'Shea² desired to discover what grammatical constructions are commonly used by adults in their written expressions. The study revealed the greatest needs of the American people and the phases of grammar that should be taught in grammar courses. It revealed that many grammatical constructions to which much attention is given are almost useless in the written expression of everyday affairs and other constructions that are important are not emphasized. The study by Pease reached the same conclusion.

1. Rivlin, *Functional Grammar*, Columbia University Press.
 2. Stormzand and O'Shea, How Much English Grammar?, p.9.

CHAPTER IV

THE TREND TOWARD FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR

The revolt against the teaching of formal grammar in the schools which set in near the end of the 19th Century was a perfectly natural one. Grammar was the nucleus of the school's curriculum and finally became the most important subject in the course of study, being considered the master of all subjects from 1775 to 1785. As has been stated previously a program of grammar consisted of slavish memorizations and recitation of rules. Students were forced to parse and analyze long sentences with no attempt on the part of the teacher to show the relationship of the lessons learned with written and oral problems. The idea that grammar had any value or function in correcting speech habits was unknown. In fact, the subject was so inclusive that its real value was lost. Moore comments that grammar demanded much and gave little.

Excerpts from a few of the textbooks of this period will give a clear picture of the inclusiveness and attitude regarding this subject.

Grammar then is the Art of teaching the true Sound and writing of Letters; the Distinction of Words and their Construction in sentences; called: Ortheopy, Orthography, Analogy, Syntax. Grammar is the Art of expressing the Relation of Words in Construction, with due Quantity in Speaking and Orthography in Writing. Hence, it is, that a Grammar of whatever

language, shows the Art of Speaking and Writing that Language well. What does the English Grammar teach? The English Grammar teaches us to speak and write the English Language rightly. How many parts has Grammar? Grammar has four parts: Orthography, Prosody, Etymology and Syntax.¹

Grammar is the art which instructs us in the right use of Language. The English Grammar is a system of rules for speaking and writing the English language with propriety.²

Grammar is the art of speaking and writing a language properly. Propriety of language consists in its conformity to the customs of the nation in general and especially of its approved speakers and writers. For this reason, many words not agreeable to analogy, when established by such authority, must be accounted proper. Grammar treats of letters, syllables, words and sentences.³

Grammar is the art of expressing the Relation of Things in Construction; with due Accent in Speaking and Orthography in Writing, according to the customs of these whose language we learn.⁴

The idea of correctness carried over in the 19th Century, although attempts were made to introduce scientific information based on the opinions of linguistic scholars. Two of the most ardent supporters of formal grammar during this century were Lindley Murray and Gould Brown, authors of two of the most popular textbooks of that time. These books followed very closely the Latin pattern. The con-

1. F. B. Gruen, English Grammar in American High Schools Since 1900, p. 37.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

ception of grammar as expressed in textbooks published prior to 1850 was accepted up to 1900, although changes had been made in the method of teaching. Lyman¹ summarizes the general thought of this period when he says:

This in a nutshell is the philosophy of grammar from Lily to almost 1900. 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 the 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 involve this extremely analytical philosophy. Therefore, they are the best methods of learning.

The following statements substantiate the quotation given above.

Grammar is the art of speaking and writing any language with propriety, being conformable to certain rules, founded on usage and custom.²

Grammar is a system of rules and observations drawn from the common speech of mankind in their several languages; and it teaches us to speak and pronounce, to spell and write with propriety and exactness, according to the customs of those in every nation, who were supposed to speak and write their own language best.³

American English Grammar teaches the science of speaking and writing with propriety, the English language adapted in the United States.⁴

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1. Ibid., p. 42.
 2. Ibid., p. 45.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Ibid., p. 48.

Grammar teaches us to express and communicate our thoughts, either in speaking and writing, with strict propriety.¹

Grammar, when applied to practice, is also considered as an art; and, in this point of view, it is defined to be the art of speaking and writing correctly.²

Grammar does not at all make rules and laws for language; it only reports the facts of good language, and in an orderly way, so that they may be easily referred to or learned, by anyone who has occasion to do so.³

Although some progress was made in presenting the science of grammar, formal grammar still dominated the textbooks and classrooms in the early part of the 19th Century. The authors still followed the authors of the 18th Century. During the latter part of this century, however, it is interesting to note that ideas of promoters of formal grammar were challenged by grammarians who were well trained in scientific grammar. Grammar continued to be a body of fixed rules which were established by nature or custom as a guide to correct speech until teachers began to question the usefulness of the method of teaching used and asserted that the subject served no value in the curriculum.

This action grew out of the influence of Horace Mann and George Barnard who advocated teaching inductively.

1. Ibid.,

2. Ibid., p. 49.

3. Ibid., p. 54.

From 1895 to 1900 grammar was almost thoroughly discredited. The result of this movement was a reform in methods of instruction, but the traditional concept remained practically the same. Many of the textbooks changed a word in a definition, emphasis shifted from parsing to analyzing and diagramming and from memorization to composition.

When formal grammar was displaced by inductive teaching of speaking and writing through practice, it was felt that something valuable was missing. A need for grammar was deeply felt; hence, it gradually came back into the schools after much discussion.

Progress in this century was little but it was important because the modern methods of teaching which were introduced were used to a small extent. With the coming of the twentieth century formal grammar was to feel its deepest criticisms and finally become almost an obsolete subject. Grammar of the present day has emancipated English from Latin methods and its content has been reduced to include only those portions which are useful and practical.

The trend toward functional grammar has been more definite since 1913. This was the year that the Committee of Ten endorsed the movement. It was in this year also that the National Council of Teachers of English through

the Committee on the Articulation of the Elementary Course in English with the course in English in High Schools made this significant statement:

Too much is asked for in the way of analytic grammar.... The time devouring demands of formal English grammar are outrageous; the results on language interpretation and language use are practically nil. The elementary school should sharply delimit the term "grammar" as applying to analytic, formal grammar - the grammar that encumbers absorptive little minds with useless terminology - and emphasize grammar in the sense of correct use, the facts to be drilled on as use and not to be terminologized.¹

This committee stated further that grammar was an educational bug-a-boo, exciting terror when the word was called. It recommended that an attack should be launched to refute this belief and it desired to be one of the first groups to "take a hand at the rope to pull down this heathen idol."

In 1914 the Committee on English in the Country Schools recommended:

..... that the time heretofore devoted to spelling, formal grammar, and formal reading be materially lessened and that grammar be not taught as a separate study but correlated with language and composition work.²

The report of The Association of High School Teachers

1. "Report of the Committee on the Articulation of the Elementary Course in English with the Course in English in the High School," English Journal, III (1914), pp.307-308.

2. "Report of the Committee on English in the Country Schools" (National Council of Teachers of English), English Journal, IV (1915), p.45.

of English of New York City, 1914, issued a leaflet which stated that technical grammar received the greater part of the time for English in the seventh and eighth grades, although it was not, as a rule, closely related to training in expression.

In 1915 The Virginia English Teachers Association adopted resolutions drawn up by a joint committee of that association and the Modern Language and the Classical Associations of Virginia. The resolution -

.... recommended the teaching of only sentence speech, essentials of grammar incidentally, with much practice in oral and written composition in the grades, the teaching of English grammar in connection with the grammar of other languages.¹

In 1916 the National Association of Teachers of English of New York opposed the Regents examination in grammar, which is a prerequisite to graduation from the state's high schools. It favored, however, retention of the requirement for those training to be English teachers.

The Joint Committee on the Reorganization of English, 1917, emphasized functional grammar and a correlation of grammar and composition.

Grammar and rhetoric are regarded in this report as the theoretical side of correct and effective expression in speech and writing. Both should find their meaning throughout the course in

1. Gruen, Op. Cit., p.84.

terms of the actual compositional activities of the pupils. This implies that theoretical principles shall be formulated in large measure by the pupils themselves, and that the value of them shall appear in connection with the projects upon which the pupils are engaged. In other words, exercises are not to be devised for the sake of exemplifying principles, but principles are to be seized upon because they enable greater success in communication. Needless to say, such a view narrows immensely the range of grammatical and rhetorical topics which it seems worthwhile to include in the course of study.¹

The Preliminary Report of the Grammar Subcommittee of the Committee on Economy of Time (National Council of Teachers of English), 1919, accepted the emphasis on functional grammar and made the following comment:

The greatest contribution which grammar study can make is to the mastery of the sentence; to unflinching recognition of the sentence unit in speech and writing, and to power of building clear, vigorous, and varied sentences and of interpreting niceties of syntax.²

The Commission on Junior High School English (Department of Superintendence Commission on the Curriculum), 1927, recommended that grammar should be taught not as an end in itself but as an aid to composition.

The Report on a Minimum Grammar by a Committee of the Wisconsin Teachers Association not only limited grammar to functional grammar, but restricted it to such grammar

1. Reorganization of English in Secondary Schools, United States Bureau of Publications, Bulletin of 1917, No. 2, p. 34.

2. "Report of the Committee on Economy of Time", Preliminary Report of the Grammar Subcommittee, English Journal, VIII (1919), p. 179.

as functions in the mastery of sentences.

.... It should therefore be the first and chief purpose of this report to present the topics of organized grammar study which contribute to sentence mastery in the large sense, and suggest when they should be presented.¹

1. "Report of a Minimum Grammar by a Committee of the Wisconsin English Teachers Association", English Journal, XXV (1928), p. 214.

CHAPTER V

DEFINITIONS OF FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR

What is functional grammar? This question is often asked when the term functional grammar is used. Many persons have given definitions, but there is still doubt in the minds of many people as to the authenticity of these definitions. The idea expressed by Dora V. Smith¹ is that nobody knows what grammar is functional. This statement was made after Miss Smith made a survey of 22 junior and 22 senior high schools to determine the amount of grammar which is functional. An analysis of the grammar content in those schools showed that the courses varied from 45 to 149 items. Saucier² says that supporters of formal grammar, in an attempt to retain the subject in the elementary school, call the subject "functional grammar". This statement cannot be accepted as true because a study of the two schools of thought will show clearly that functional and formal grammar are the antithesis of each other in aim, scope and methods of presentation. Numerous definitions have been given for functional grammar. Far too many to attempt a detailed list. It is the hope of the writer that the few cited herein are sufficient to give the reader a

1. Smith, Instruction in English, p. 35.

2. W. A. Saucier, Theory and Practice in the Elementary School, p. 227.

fairly definite concept of the term.

Concerning functional grammar, Monroe¹ makes this statement:

Scientific grammar has attempted to approach the subject from the inductive viewpoint, studying individual forms of speech in relation to their corresponding moments of mental activity, rather than in relation to any supposed permanent characteristics of mind. Conditions are always changing; thus grammar, to be functional must apply to the needs of the time and cannot be stationery.

Cross² gives the following definition:

When we use the term "functional English grammar", we mean those observed facts in the English language which have a function, an office, a work to do in directing toward the standard or literary use or spoken use of the language by the large number of cultured men and women who use as a medium of thought exchange the code which we call the English language.

Professor Ryan³ touches upon one of the most fundamental aspects of functional grammar when he states:

It is practice not theory; the ability to do, not simply to know. The true grammarian is not he who makes rules, but he who, from the usage of people, discovers the laws of common speech with a view of imparting a knowledge of correct expression. All selections of words and rules that do not tend to this end are useless.

The definition given by Lyman⁴ is similar to the one given by Ryan. To him functional grammar is that process

1. Paul Monroe, "English Grammar", A Cyclopedia of Education, III (1933), p. 134.

2. Cross, Principles of Secondary Education, p. 434.

3. E. Ryan, The Teaching of English in College, Report of the Commission of Education, No. 1 (1902), pp. 923-924.

4. Lyman, Op. Cit., p. 24.

which proceeds from practice to theories and rules.

The question which naturally arises after definitions of functional grammar have been given is what methods should be employed in teaching the subject. Unlike the methods used in formal grammar, it is sometimes recommended that functional grammar be taught incidentally. Saucier¹ advocates this method because he believes usage, or the real oral and written expression of boys and girls should determine the items of grammar and the method of teaching them. Emma J. Wilson² strongly opposes the idea of functional teaching if it means incidental, occasional and haphazard methods of teaching.

Cross³ says that functional grammar should be taught through practice and speaking, the teacher giving reasons for corrections when they are made.

When modernists speak of functional grammar Joseph H. Taylor⁴ says,

They mean usually, I think, that they would teach only that part of grammar which is needed by pupils to correct their own errors of speech and to guide their own construction.

1. Saucier, Op. Cit., pp. 227-228

2. Wilson, Op. Cit., 36

3. Cross, "The Functional Teaching of English Grammar," The English Journal, IV (1915), p. 654.

4. J. E. Taylor, "Functional Grammar", School and Society, XIII (1921), p. 550.

The National Joint Committee on the Reorganization of English in Secondary Schools¹ made the following statement:

A sane attitude toward the teaching of grammar would seem to be to find out what parts and aspects of the subject have actual values to the children in enabling them to improve their speaking, reading and writing, to teach these parts according to scientific methods and to ignore any and all portions of the conventional school grammar that fall outside these categories. In general, the grammar worth teaching is the grammar of use - function in the sentence - and the grammar to be passed over is the grammar of classification.

1. James Fleming Hosié, Chairman, Reorganization of English in Secondary Schools, U. S. Bureau of Education, (1917), No. 2, 1937, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C.

CHAPTER VI

THE STATUS OF FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR IN FIFTY NEGRO HIGH SCHOOLS OF TEXAS

The curricula of all public high schools of Texas include English as a requirement for graduation. This four year period is devoted to the teaching of grammar and literature.

Data obtained from questionnaires used in this study reveal quite a variance in the time devoted to grammar. Twenty-four schools indicated that grammar is taught from the ninth to the twelfth grades. This is an irregularity which is found in the large urban high schools, as well as in the rural schools. It might be that instruction in grammar is given along with other courses. Since the writer had no way of knowing this, she assumed that grammar is taught exclusively in the grades indicated. Six persons indicated that grammar was taught in the tenth grade only; six indicated that grammar was taught in the eleventh grade only and seven persons teach this subject in the twelfth grade only.

A study of Table I will reveal the fact that fifty two percent of the teachers who participated in this study teach functional grammar and six percent teach formal grammar. Thirty-six percent of the teachers combine the

two types. These persons believe that it is necessary to know the fundamentals of grammar before functional centers of expression can be understood. This practice is a good one provided the teacher does not spend too much time on the fundamentals and neglect the functional part. It is, therefore, necessary for the teacher to know exactly how much of his time will be spent on fundamentals before applying them to everyday use.

TABLE I
TYPES OF GRAMMAR TAUGHT IN 50 NEGRO
HIGH SCHOOLS OF TEXAS

Kind	Number	Percent
Functional	26	52
Combination of two types	18	36
Formal	3	6
No reply	3	6

Functional grammar is recommended for study in the secondary school because of its value to the student. This recommendation has been accepted by English teachers of Texas. Table II indicates clearly that 78 percent of the teachers have found functional grammar the more beneficial to the student. It is important to note that while 36 percent of the teachers indicated that

they teach functional and formal grammar as a combined course, only 4 percent believe this method is the more beneficial to the student. No teacher thought formal grammar was the more beneficial.

The information given in Table II is further evidence that the English teachers of Texas are gradually abandoning traditional phases of grammar content. In the suggested courses of study mood was mentioned only once.

TABLE II
MOST BENEFICIAL TYPE OF GRAMMAR AS INDICATED
BY ENGLISH TEACHERS IN 50 NEGRO
HIGH SCHOOLS

Kind	Number	Percent
Functional	39	78
Undecided	9	18
Combination of two types	2	4
Formal	0	0

The once stressed classification of adjectives into pronominal, limiting and interrogative was not mentioned. Diagramming was mentioned in only three instances. The classification of nouns as abstract and concrete did not appear in any course of study. None of the teachers included parsing as one of the essentials of grammar. The traditional conjugation of verbs was recommended in only five instances. The classification of adverbs into ad-

verbs of manner, degree and concession is rapidly disappearing. No mention was made of vocative and dative cases, adjunct accusative and retained object.

Of the reasons given for teaching functional grammar the one which occurred most frequently was that the subject is practical and less complicated. The second reason given most frequently was that functional grammar fits a student to meet his everyday needs in speaking and writing. One person said the teaching of functional grammar stresses the idea that there is no "Sunday" grammar. Correct speech habits should be strived for everyday. Other comments given for teaching functional grammar are:

1. Functional grammar is easily understood by students who are below the average.
2. It carries with it a deeper sense of meaning. Functional grammar deals with the forms of words and their relation to each other.
3. Things drilled and taught in isolation tend to remain as such.
4. The correctness of anything becomes a reality through use.
5. Most people do not go to college; therefore, they need grammar in order to learn to write and speak correctly on their jobs.

6. Functional grammar acquaints the students with the common errors made in everyday life and offers chances for correction.

7. Functional grammar enables a child to find his errors and attempt to correct the same.

8. It treats of immediate problems which is necessary before abstract material is presented.

9. Functional grammar is interesting to the class.

CHAPTER VII

A STUDY OF ERRORS MADE BY STUDENTS IN 50 NEGRO HIGH SCHOOLS OF TEXAS

There have been a number of investigations in the field of English which attempted to ascertain the types of errors made by pupils in writing and speaking. The main purpose of these investigations was to determine the common errors and from these errors derive the minimum essentials for a core curriculum in language-grammar. It is the belief of teachers of functional grammar that the frequency of various errors has a direct bearing on the relative amount of drill that should be given on different items of instruction.

There have been several studies of errors made at various times. These may be classified into three headings: (1) most frequent errors in children's speech, (2) studies of the most persistent errors in oral English, and (3) studies of the seriousness of errors of oral English. The most extensive investigation of the errors of children was made by Charters and Miller in Kansas City, Missouri in 1915. Teachers in the elementary schools noted the errors of their students for one week. The errors were reported to and classified by Charters and Miller. Under the direction of Charters, similar studies were made in five other cities: Bonham, Texas, Columbia, Missouri, Detroit,

Michigan, Pittsburg, Pennsylvania and Hibbling, Minnesota.

Other similar studies made which reported the same general order of frequency are: the Connersville Study by Wilson, the Bose Study reported by Meed, the Cincinnati Study by Sears and Diebel, the Indianapolis Study by David and the Port Arthur Study by Power.

The method of collecting errors most frequently used is the one wherein teachers observe the written and oral errors of their students and record the same. In the other method, the investigator notes and records errors himself. This is not done as often as the first method, however.

Although Lyman¹ states,

No other technique of investigation reported in this monograph is as loose, inaccurate, and unreliable as the techniques employed in "collecting" errors in oral English,

the writer is in complete agreement with Cross² who says,

Functional teaching means a search for the pupils' habitual errors and then a systematic and logical organization of the grammar facts that are needed

Henry Harap³ says, "the most important task of the teacher of functional grammar is to have a complete collection of common mistakes."

This study follows the method of collecting errors that is most frequently used. Teachers of English of the four

1. Lyman, *Op. Cit.*, p. 131.

2. Cross, *Op. Cit.*, p. 653.

3. Harap, "Functional Grammar", *English Journal*, XIII (1921), p. 74.

year accredited high schools were asked to observe for ten days the errors made by their students in writing and speaking and to list them. In the event a person had been in the teaching profession for quite sometime and knew the common errors made by his students, he was asked to list these errors on the basis of his observation and experience.

Of the fifty persons who returned the questionnaire, only thirty-eight listed specific errors. Four hundred and sixty-seven errors were listed, but a careful check revealed that three statements which were labelled erroneous were correct. All figures tabulated are based, therefore, on a total of 464 errors. Table III shows the distribution of errors made. It is interesting to note that the data compares favorably with results of other studies.

The persons who failed to list specific errors stated general types of mistakes made by their students. These statements, 24 percent of the total, are classified as follows in order of frequency of mention:

1. Improper use of pronouns
2. Poor sentence structure
3. Disagreement of subject and verb
4. Incorrect use of auxiliary verbs
5. Errors in punctuation

Other errors mentioned only once or twice were: double subjects, double negatives, poor spelling, incorrect comparisons of adjectives and adverbs, misplaced modifiers, dangling participles and gerunds and poor enunciation.

On all studies of errors made by students in their oral and written English, 40 to 60 percent of them are made in the incorrect use of the verb. Results of this

TABLE III
DISTRIBUTION OF ERRORS MADE BY STUDENTS
IN 50 HIGH SCHOOLS OF TEXAS

Kind	Number	Percent
Verbs	255	55
Pronunciation	72	15.5
Pronouns	56	12
Adverbs	20	4.3
Double subjects	15	3.2
Adjectives	12	2.6
Prepositions	11	2.4
Miscellaneous errors	23	5

study are quite in line with previous studies because the percentage of errors made in the use of the verb is 55. Table IV shows the types of errors made in using verbs and the number of each type of error.

The first item mentioned in the above table is not limited to written language, but this error is made fre-

quently in oral conversation. The percentage of errors in this phase of English indicates the special drill and attention that is necessary. Most of the mistakes occur in the use of the various forms of the verb "to be". Students persist in using "is" with the pronouns "I", "we", "you", and "they" in sentences, such as:

1. You is my brother.
2. They is not here.
3. I or we is ready.

TABLE IV
TYPES OF ERRORS MADE IN THE USE OF VERBS

Type of Error	Number	Percent
Failure of verb to agree with subject	85	33.3
Mistakes in principal parts	81	31.8
Wrong use of verb or auxiliary	49	19.2
Confusion of tenses	40	15.7

This error is also common when compound subjects are used.

1. Mary and I is going.
2. You and I is good friends.

Another type of error made is the use of "was" with "you".

1. Where was you yesterday?
2. If I was you ...

A great number of errors is made in the use of "have" for "has". About one-half of the errors were made in this manner.

1. He have my hat.
2. She have it.
3. The bell have rung.

There are a few instances where "has" is used instead of "have", but the teacher will find this one of her minor errors.

Another troublesome verb is "do" in all of its forms. There were more errors made in it than all other verbs with the exception of the verb "to be". Common mistakes are found in the use of "do not" for "does not".

1. He don't want it.
2. She don't think so.

The past participle of the verb is very often used instead of the word "have".

1. I done turned it in.
2. She done wrote.
3. I done broke by pencil.

There seems to be little knowledge of how to use "did" correctly. There are more errors in the present tense and

past participle because "did" seems to be used very little. "Done" is used instead of the past tense of the verb "do".

1. I done.
2. She done it.

The use of "ain't" for "have" or "has" appeared on practically every list of errors submitted. The status of this word is not exactly known by the writer. It is sometimes referred to as "convenient" usage. In the study made by Wilson to determine the heinousness of 20 most frequent grammatical errors found in oral English of school children, "ain't" was second on the list. In the study of errors made in Pittsburg by Charters, the teachers listed "ain't" as an error but stated it was not as serious as it was frequent. The use of this word ranks third on the list of errors made by high school students of Texas.

Mistakes in the use of principal parts of verbs constitute 29 percent of the errors made in the use of this part of speech. As was seen in the use of "done" for the past tense, this is true in other verbs also. Frequent errors occur also in the use of the past participle without an auxiliary verb.

1. I seen him do it.
2. He taken my book.

Other verbs which are often used incorrectly are: "hung" for "hanged", "hung" for "hang", "throwed" for

"threw", "broke" for "broken" and "busted" for "burst".

Errors included in item four under Table IV are the use of "lie" for "lay", "sit" for "set", "may" for "can", "shall" for "will" and "got" for "have". The use of the wrong auxiliary verb has been noted previously, as

1. The bell have rung.
2. They has done it.

TABLE V
TYPES OF ERRORS MADE IN THE USE OF PRONOUNS

Types of Errors	Number	Percent
Wrong form of pronoun in nominative case	34	60.7
Wrong form of pronoun after preposition	14	25.0
Failure of pronoun to agree with antecedent	8	14.3

The pronoun was the second item listed in the table of errors. A review of other studies made will reveal the fact that this part of speech is usually ranked among the top sources of error. The above table shows the distribution of errors.

In the first item the errors appearing most frequently are the use of "him and I", "she and him" and the placing of the pronoun first.

1. Him and I will work today.
2. She and him are friends.
3. I and Mary will go.

The correct pronoun used after a preposition or a verb also causes much confusion.

1. This is between you and I.
2. My letter is from she.

The agreement of the pronoun and its antecedent is quite often difficult for students to understand. However, according to data in this study it has ceased to be the cause of a great number of errors. This is obvious by the fact that it constituted only 13 percent of the total errors made.

Other types of errors listed in Table III are noted below in the order of their rank.

I. Mistakes in the use of adverbs

1. Use of double negatives. I couldn't hardly ...
I don't have no
2. Use of "well" for "good." She sings good.
3. Use of "more" in comparisons. She looks more better

the use of double subjects

the use of adjectives

1. Wrong use of superlative degree. She has the beautifulest picture.
2. Use of "them" for "these." Them boys
3. Wrong use of "their" and "there." There hats are red.

IV. Mistakes in prepositions

1. Use of "of" for "have". I should of tried.
2. Ending sentence with "at". Where is it at?
3. Use of superfluous preposition. I saw him jump off of

V. Miscellaneous errors

1. Use of wrong conjunction. The reason was because
2. Omission of apostrophe. This is Marys hat.
3. Failure to distinguish between "its" and "it's".
It's morning. Put the chair in its place.
4. Excessive words. This here dress is mine.
5. Incorrect spelling of such words as: believe, receive, separate, two, to, too.
6. Improper punctuation. Mary said come here.
7. Failure to use capital letters at beginning of sentence. ruth came home.
8. Failure to capitalize proper names. lake erie, lake michigan, lake huron.
9. Poor sentence structure. We had ought to be proud of our school.

A glimpse at Table III will reveal the fact that the second largest number of errors reported was in the mispronunciation of words used in the daily conversations of high school students. Many of the errors discussed previously are made in oral and written speech, but the ones under consideration at this time are seldom seen in writing.

One of the main causes of the persistence of errors in pronunciation is the poor environment from which the majority of high school students come each day and to which they return after the school hour. Because the parents and people of the community, as a whole, have had very little contact with the school, they speak a different language from that which is taught by the schools. This faulty

habit of speech has become a part of the child when he enters the public schools and extensive drills and practice are needed to correct it.

All the errors made in speaking cannot, however, be blamed on home and environmental factors. Many of them are due to mere laziness on the part of the individual. The ease with which "hafto", "outa", "cantcha" and other words may be said makes it rather difficult for the lazy person to pronounce these words and phrases correctly. Errors listed by high school teachers were: "gimme" for "give me", "fitcha" for "fit you", "git" for "get", "dis" for "this", "dat" for "that", "libery" for "library", "wuz" for "was", "ketch" for "catch", "gonna" for "going to", "come 'ere" for "come here", "did ju" for "did you", "purt ner" for nearly and many others.

The "er" habit was mentioned frequently by teachers. This is a fault which is used by adults, as well as students and little is done to correct it. Since the habit is so deeply embedded, constant and vigorous drill will be required over an extended period of time to correct it.

If someone inquired of the value of collecting errors the writer would say none unless something was done to eliminate them. The purpose of the teacher who collects errors made by students should be, in the first place, to

acquaint himself thoroughly with the areas of errors and, in the second place, attempt to make students conscious of these errors. This should not be the end of the project. Motivation is needed in getting the student to see the need for correct speech habits and direct him in acquiring them. The teacher should study errors carefully in an effort to determine the ones which will be most difficult to eradicate. Some errors will require individual instruction but others may be corrected through group instruction. The wise teacher will seek methods of teaching correct speech which will insure the greatest results to her students.

CHAPTER VIII

A SUGGESTED COURSE OF STUDY FOR FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR

Henry Harap¹ in his article on functional grammar says, "a course of study in functional grammar should have as its aim the improvement of the pupils' speech."

In order to give this aim direction, it is necessary for the teacher to know the areas which are in need of improvement. Cross² says the first step in the teaching of functional grammar is a systematic search for habitual errors made by students and from them set up the minimum essentials. This practice is sometimes criticized because the term is too loosely applied. Smith says,

.... minimum essentials is the term loosely used to indicate anything from an absolute minimum of skills to be mastered 100 percent for passing to a list of materials, literary classics included, to which every pupil must be exposed at some time.

In this study the term "minimum essentials" means those items of grammar necessary to correct the errors made by high school students of Texas. These minimum requirements are derived from a study of the errors made and recommendations of teachers who suggested the topics necessary to correct the errors made by their students.

1. Harap, Op. Cit., p. 74.
2. Cross, Op. Cit., p. 653
3. Smith, Op. Cit., p. 41.

The course of study as suggested by the teachers who participated in this study covers a wide area of material, ranging from instruction in practical conversation to social behavior.

On a whole, the teachers of Texas are conscious of the movement to integrate the teaching of English with other areas of learning. Grammar should not be an isolated subject but should be taught along with such topics as the use of the library, how to conduct a club meeting and oral expression of any kind.

Based on the errors made by high school students of Texas, the teachers recommended the following course of study:

I. The sentence

- A. Concept and construction of
- B. Kinds
- C. Essential parts

II. Parts of speech

1. Verb

- A. Agreement of subject and verb
- B. Principal parts
- C. Properties - number, tense, voice

2. Nouns and pronouns

- A. Kinds and case of
- B. Agreement with antecedent
- C. Use of relative and personal pronouns

3. Adjectives and adverbs

- A. Comparison
- B. Use after copula
- C. Difference in form

4. Prepositions and conjunctions

Each part of speech should be reduced to its most simple terms. The verb and pronoun should receive special emphasis.

III. Punctuation

- A. Uses of period, comma and apostrophe. Other punctuation marks should be taught as need arises.

IV. Capitalization

- A. Initial letter in sentence
- B. Proper names
- C. Titles

V. Building paragraphs

VI. Practice in writing techniques

- A. Friendly and business letters
- B. Creative writing

VII. Pronunciation and enunciation

VIII. Vocabulary building

IX. Spelling

X. Practice in oral expression

CHAPTER IX

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY

The teaching of grammar has been the source of more discussion and disagreement than any other phase of the English curriculum. The subject has always been considered difficult because it was patterned after the Latin language which is highly inflected. Until 1640 textbooks in grammar were written in Latin. Ben Johnson was the first person to write an English grammar in English.

The method of teaching formal grammar was by memorizing rules and parsing words and sentences. This method was believed to (1) discipline the mind, (2) aid in literary interpretation, (3) prepare students for a study of foreign language and (4) aid in correctness in speech and writing. Research has proved that a study of formal grammar has no value in any of the fields mentioned.

The movement for functional grammar grew out of a desire and determination to abolish formal grammar. Although this movement was advocated as early as 1863 it was not until 1913 that the trend toward functional grammar took definite form and direction. Since that time methods of teaching this subject have gradually been changed, but there is still much improvement to be made at this time.

Functional grammar is taught in 52 percent of the four year accredited Negro high schools of Texas. The usefulness of the subject gives it precedence over the formal method. A program of functional grammar should be designed to correct the oral and written errors in students' speech. Any functional textbooks would be short because functional grammar is simple.

In order to formulate a program of functional grammar to meet the needs of students, a teacher should become acquainted with the common errors made in the written and oral speech of her children. These errors should determine what would be taught. A course in functional grammar should include only those things which will prevent the commission of an error or assist the students in correcting an error that has been made.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Competent teachers in the field of English should be employed to give instruction in English grammar.
2. Instruction in grammar should not be confined to textbooks. In fact, textbooks should be used only as reference books and guides for the teacher.
3. Studies should be made to determine to what extent a knowledge of functional grammar aids in eliminating

or correcting errors made by students.

4. The teaching of formal grammar continuously be discouraged. Although most teachers say they teach functional grammar an observation of their methods of teaching will reveal the tendency to follow the formal method.

5. The exchange of ideas is commonly done through oral speech. This makes it necessary for students to know how to talk. Emphasis in instruction should be shifted from written to oral drills.

6. Courses of study in grammar should be formulated by the teacher, based on the needs of her students. Only those items of grammar which will meet the needs of students should be taught.

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