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THE ROLE OF LINGUISTICS
IN THE
HIGH-SCHOOL ENGLISH PROGRAM

DISSERTATION
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Radical changes in the study of language have been taking place over the last one hundred years in this country. Probably the most important developments are the two positive improvements in the study of language summarized by McMillan: "(1) a drastic revision of the orthodox concept of language to include such assumptions as (a) language is speech, (b) language has system, (c) language has variety, and (d) language changes, and (2) an accumulation of an enormous mass of facts about the English language and the refinement of methods for collecting and classifying facts."¹ The changing concept of language and the concomitant expansion of knowledge about language are the results of a new, scientific orientation to language that is known as linguistics. Linguistics can properly be called scientific because it is marked by the fivefold characteristics of science: a distinct subject matter, an objective descriptive system, a consistent means of classification, the ability to make predictions, and the habit of constant revision and re-evaluation of data.

1. The subject matter of linguistics is language, which linguists define with careful thoroughness: "A language is a structured system of arbitrary vocal sounds and sequences of sounds which is used, or can be used, in interpersonal communication by an aggregation of

human beings, and which rather exhaustively catalogs the things, events, and processes in the human environment."² The primacy of the spoken language is thus established, and such systems as sign language are eliminated from consideration.

2. To describe the facts of the subject matter of linguistics, scholars make use of a notational system -- phonetics -- that facilitates objectivity. With this instrument, trained phoneticians can record the speech sounds of any language with precision, and independently made transcriptions will be in close harmony with one another. Other methods of achieving objective descriptions include recordings and the use of the sound spectograph.

3. Once the raw data of a language are assembled, they must be classified. Linguistics has developed phonemics for treating the significant sounds of speech, morphemics for the organization of phonemes into meaningful groups, and grammar for organizing words into such combinations as phrases, clauses, and sentences.

4. The predictions made by the scientific linguists deal with the probable effect of patterned sounds upon other native speakers of the language. Frequently these predictions appear similar to those of the traditional grammarian. The important difference lies in their respective methodologies. The linguist proceeds from observed fact to conclusion; the traditional grammarian transmits inherited conclusions.

5. Linguists continually revise their generalizations and findings. They regard laws of science as merely statements that are based on historical incidents. They believe that new instruments of exploration and investigation may uncover data outside the pattern of a presently defined generalization. The new data cannot be ignored; the law is revised.

The most significant link in this chain for the American school is the second: an objective description of the facts of language. Present programs of language study in secondary school English classrooms are usually not based upon the data made available by the scholarly research of the scientific language specialists. The facts of language usage are consequently distorted in some school programs. Many of the textbooks used in these programs, for example, do not recognize the difference between informal and formal spoken English and between spoken and written English. Notions of correctness in the use of English exist than can be traced back to the heyday of the prescriptive grammarians of the eighteenth century.

'Beginning with the seventh grade, the typical secondary-school pupil today is introduced to a classification of his language into eight parts of speech. Two of those parts of speech, the noun and the verb, are defined notionally, that is, by what they "mean." The other six parts of speech are usually defined syntactically, by what they do in a sentence. This classification is repeated for the pupil in most succeeding grades. Despite the repetitive emphasis on this aspect of language study, many pupils who fail to grasp the
classification early in the school program are unable ever to cope with it. These pupils are not altogether to blame. Such words as "lady," "village," and "stone" obviously name objective realities and meet the definition of noun: the name of a person, place, or thing. But in phrases like "a lady doctor," "the village newspaper," and "the stone wall," these obvious nouns modify other nouns and are to be identified as adjectives, for adjectives are words that modify nouns. The circuitous reasoning of traditional grammar remains incomprehensible for many secondary-school graduates, who too often look back upon their English training with resentment and who, unfortunately, carry through life erroneous concepts about their native language.

Teaching pupils to write effectively is another vital part of the English program in the secondary school. But educators have become increasingly aware of the lack of correlation between a knowledge of traditional grammar and skill in the use of language. Sensitivity to words and structures appears to be fostered more by the new grammar than by the old. Textbooks and teachers still make many strictures against certain locutions on the basis of fiats issued by earlier, unsophisticated writers of grammar texts. Careful attention to present cultivated usage should serve to change these narrow attitudes toward the English language, which is a dynamic and ever-changing complex. The system by which users of English are able to transmit their thoughts to others should be the primary concern of a grammar of English. Traditional English grammar, however, has
been patterned misguidedly on Greek and Latin grammar. Latin and Greek make extensive use of inflection, the process by which a variation of word form distinguishes its meanings or uses. The Latin verb, "habeo," contains in that one form what in English must be rendered with two: "I have." To indicate the future tense, a variation in the Latin form to "habebon" accomplishes what in English requires the addition of another form: "I shall have." Languages like Latin, which uses inflection to a high degree, are called synthetic languages. English or Chinese, on the other hand, which adds a form to indicate another function of a word, is an analytical language. The difference between a highly inflected language like Latin and a highly analytical one like English makes the one grammar inapplicable to the other. Only the fact that these early writers were not equipped to view English with scientific detachment can account for their zeal to model English grammar upon Latin.

The concept of levels of usage only recently began receiving attention in English classes in secondary schools. No one really believed that there was a single standard in the use of the English language, but teachers acted as if this kind of situation prevailed. Pupils, certainly, always knew better: There was a special brand of English to be used in class; a different brand could be used outside class. Pronunciation was treated with such limited understanding of dialectal differences that "Schoolmarm" became a pejorative term in the vocabulary of many linguists.
The current program in secondary schools is deficient too in its treatment of the history and development of the English language. Beginning with the scheme of Indo-European languages, pupils should have an opportunity to study the interesting evolution of English. The English class in the secondary school ought to concern itself with the rich heritage that the fascinating history of the English language can transmit. Securing a knowledge of the development of the English language will involve the pupil in a study of the vast resources available to him in language. There is a positive cultural advantage in learning, for example, that the Latin, Greek, German, Armenian, Albanian, Celtic, Indo-Iranian, Balto-Slavonic, and Tokharian families of languages are related to one another, having sprung from a prototype language usually called Indo-European. That English evolved from a branch of the Germanic language and has continually been changing serves to illustrate the linguistic truth that languages split up because of natural change, geographic division, and contact with other languages.\(^3\) Old English, Middle English, and Modern English are the three great periods of the language requiring more formal treatment in the secondary-school English program. With its strikingly different spelling, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, Old English seems like a foreign language rather than a familiar one. The Middle English period, approximately 1150 to 1500,

\(^3\)Stuart Robinson and Frederic G. Cassidy, *The Development of Modern English*, p. 16.
is especially important for the great changes that took place in the grammar of English. The loss of grammatical gender and the decline of inflectional endings are major milestones in the movement of the English language from synthetic to analytic forms.

Some knowledge of the tremendous expansion of vocabulary items and the loss of many inflections would instill in pupils a deeper appreciation of the strength and versatility of English. A study of the history of the English language would also clarify the role of the eighteenth-century grammarians who formulated many of the grammar rules that are still found in school texts today. The lack of language training of these grammarians would be seen to contrast sharply with the scholarship of present-day linguistic scientists.

A final important area of the English program in secondary schools that does not receive sufficient emphasis is that of semantics, the study of how meanings of words change through gesture, context, and cultural settings. More information regarding the development of vocabulary can be made available to the teacher through the use of the insights into meaning uncovered by semantics. Vocabulary is often treated incidentally during the reading of literary works or as part of the spelling activity. More direct emphasis on the importance of the study of meaning in language would enrich this aspect of the program.

The present secondary-school English program in language is not so effective as it might be if it were freed from certain inconsistencies. The bulk of these inconsistencies was inherited from the
grammarians of the eighteenth century and should be closely evaluated today in the light of the new techniques of language study developed by linguistic science. The search for the truth about language is paramount in both approaches; a language program should equip pupils as fully as possible to aid them in understanding the phenomena of language.

**Statement of the Problem**

Because linguists report the facts about the English language as it is used today, their findings often conflict with the statements about correct usage found in secondary-school English texts. The fallacious belief has grown, in fact, that linguists destroy all standards of good usage by their very objectivity in reporting data. Another effect of the linguists' zeal in recording language data objectively, moreover, is a heightening of the cultural lag in the classroom. We know the new is true; we teach the old. Secondary schools remain conservative by tradition and temperament, espousing the moderation of Pope: "Be not the first by whom the new is tried." Modern methods of studying the English language have received scant attention in the schools. One reason that linguistic studies have made only a negligible impact upon the secondary-school English program inheres in their disquieting implication that traditional methods of treating language concepts must be abandoned in toto.

In some respects the basic assumptions and procedures of linguistic science and traditional grammar are incompatible. Linguists
cheerfully admit that their findings may go out of date immediately after publication; those concerned with the development of a sound sequential program in the secondary grades want descriptions of English that are less ephemeral. The respective attitudes of the two groups toward language are basically different. The linguist studies the spoken language to find his system of grammar; the conventional grammarian applies the grammatical categories of a Greek-Latin tradition to the written language primarily.

Every language program must provide a means by which the effectiveness of the use of that language can be discussed and developed. The vast amount of scholarly research that has been amassed by linguists in recent decades attests to the superiority of linguistics over the conventional grammar of the secondary schools as the basis on which sound programs of language arts ought to be built. Where this superiority is evident, linguistics should be used in the secondary school; where the conventional treatment of language seems superior, it ought to be studied instead. The problem of this dissertation, then, is to consider how to incorporate the techniques and discoveries of linguistic science into the secondary-school English program.

Recent publications in the field of English education indicate a groundswelling in secondary schools for a new orientation in the language program. Experimental classes being taught structural grammar are showing significant results in terms of learning efficiency. Writers in the field of linguistic science are also
beginning to show a commendable concern for effecting a greater impact upon secondary-school English programs. This trend marks a departure from the attitude of many linguists who, though they avidly pursue the many avenues of knowledge about language that their special insights reveal to them, care little for the implications their discoveries may have for secondary education. There is sufficient indication that school programs will welcome the development of more linguistic materials intended for high schools. The National Council of Teachers of English, through its Commission of the English Curriculum, summarizes the state of grammar instruction:

"...traditional English grammar, which at the present time (1956) is the grammar of English that has been adapted for use in secondary schools, has been unjustly criticized as not a scientific analysis of the English language, too prescriptive and authoritarian in attitude, and tending to interfere with careful study of the actual structure of English."

It is difficult to conceive of a more stringent indictment of the traditional grammar used in the secondary school than the "just criticism" that it tends "to interfere with careful study of the actual structure of English."

Two fundamental courses of action suggest themselves as possible curricular remedies of the lamentable state of grammar instruction currently obtaining in the secondary schools. One is to revamp the

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traditional grammar so that it more adequately describes the English language as it is. Another is to adopt a scientific analysis of the English language to replace the traditional grammar. The middle ground between these extremes suggests that the insights of linguistics be used to supplement the presentations of the traditional grammar.

Scope of the Thesis

Students of the English language have always recognized that words can be grouped into classes according to the ways in which predications are made. Some grammarians thought that these word classes or parts of speech corresponded with objects or events in the real world. The concept of a universal grammar, in fact, was not completely dispelled until linguists began analyzing various primitive languages which allowed their users to make statements about reality in a form quite different from the ones previously thought inevitable. In his work with primitive languages, for example, Sapir found that except for the noun and verb there is no part of speech that absolutely must exist in a language.\(^5\)

Traditional English grammar classifies words into parts of speech on an analogy with the Greek and Latin grammar. Dionysius Thrax named and defined categories of parts of speech for his Greek language in the second century, B.C., that, to a large extent, are

still used today for the English language. Priscian, an early Roman
grammarian of the sixth century A.D., adapted the definitions of
Thrax for Latin; these classifications were preserved virtually
unchanged through the Middle Ages. The eighteenth-century grammar-
ians, then, fixed these classifications permanently in the traditional
description of English. Karl Dykema's indictment of this tradition
is total:

The eighteenth century grammarian of English
faced enormous difficulties, of most of which he was
probably unaware. First, he was faced with the mass
of material that a total living language with all
its dialects presents, though of course he did not
recognize that he had this problem. Second, he was
totally unprepared to make an original and independent
analysis of any language because he had never been
confronted with the problem of analyzing a language
for which no formal description existed; that is,
he had no acquaintance with a methodology of lin-
guistic analysis. Third, he was fatally handicapped
by an intimate acquaintance with the concepts of
classical grammar, concepts which had come to be
accepted as universals, though many of them had
little relevancy to English; these preconceptions
also prevented him from noticing many grammatical
phenomena peculiar to English. Fourth, the cultural
atmosphere in which he worked tended to make him
look upon English as an inferior or at best a
defective language; he therefore considered himself
as in duty bound to improve and -- as the expression
was -- to ascertain the language. Fifth, he found
himself in a position never enjoyed by his classical
predecessors, the position of enjoying a large
audience, made up principally of members of the
middle class who had social aspirations.6

6Karl W. Dykema, "Historical Development of the Concept of
Such is the heritage that the secondary schools in America still uncritically transmit to pupils in English classes, and such were the men who shaped that heritage. Present-day structural linguists, however, are challenging that heritage with the scientific classifications they have been developing. Fries, Roberts, Francis, Sledd, and their colleagues have brought to their classifications the rigorously disciplined method of science. The compendious and scholarly treatment by Francis, for example, identifies five syntactic signals which are used to differentiate the parts of speech of modern English: word order, prosody, function words, inflections, and derivational contrast. Contributions to grammatical analysis like this one deserve careful study by the schools. An uncritical acceptance of an inherited tradition is anomalous in a scientific age. Chapter II of this dissertation is addressed to the thorny problem of parts of speech; it attempts to show how the traditional classification evolved and how the modern scientific one may be used in the English program of the secondary school.

No aspect of the English language program in the secondary schools is receiving more attention today than that of written composition. The number of written themes that teachers are being exhorted to assign and grade each week amounts to an extraordinarily heavy load. One prominent educator calls for a theme a week as a goal. College

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sponsors of freshman English programs usually find a lamentable deficiency in their students' ability to handle the language effectively. They consequently approve of suggestions made to require more writing on the secondary-school level. There is in fact no visible opposition to the need for more writing experiences in secondary-school English classes.

The crucial and obvious question is, however, what language teaching improves the writing performance of high-school boys and girls? There are two objections that can be leveled at the present program in composition. One is that research shows no evidence that a conscious awareness of traditional grammar brings about a more effective use of language. The other objection is related to the first and is probably explanatory of it. Since traditional grammar is admittedly inadequate in its description of language, improvement in writing ought not even be expected from a knowledge of that system.

Structural grammar, one of the products of linguistics, attempts to describe the language scientifically, that is, as a system that is patterned and predictable. The terms employed by the structural grammarians are often quite different from traditional ones inasmuch as they stand for new concepts about the English sentence. In diagramming sentences, the structural grammarian seeks out the "immediate constituents" of each structure, for example, their studies having shown that each English structure is usually constituted of
two parts. Four basic structures appear to make up the English sentence: structures of modification, predication, complementation, and coordination.\(^9\) The signals by which syntactic structure conveys grammatical meaning continue to be examined thoroughly in current linguistic publications.

It is in a sense true that each newly published treatise in linguistics renders obsolete some formerly held concepts about the language. Such occurrences are frequent in scientific investigation and should be welcomed by all who are vitally interested in widening the horizon of the present linguistic vision. Linguists build on the foundation laid by other linguists. With the publication of Syntactic Structures by Noam Chomsky in 1957, for example, a new system of grammar promises to replace or to supplement the immediate- constituent analysis of the structural grammarians. This seminal work has already been used in a new study exploring how nouns are created in the English language and how this process operates in the generation of new sentences.\(^{10}\) Thus transformational grammar, as the most recent system is known, is already a thriving enterprise. Its aim is to develop a simpler analysis of complex English structures.

The present production of these linguistic endeavors is sufficiently sound and ample for worthwhile incorporation into school

\(^{9}\text{Francis, op. cit., p. 292.}\)

\(^{10}\text{See Robert B. Lees, The Grammar of English Nominalizations.}\)
programs dealing with instruction in written composition. The principles about language discovered by linguists can help all writers of that language. Chapter III reviews some standard approaches to the teaching of written composition; outlines in some detail the ways in which an immediate-constituent grammar can be used; and presents a brief view of the new transformational grammar.

Many laymen are unaware of their confusion over the meaning of the term "grammar." They have the notion that grammar and "correct English" are synonymous. The basic misconception in their attitude toward language has a long tradition behind it, one that should be studied and brought to light. Grammar is a system of generalization about how people do say things; grammar per se has nothing to do with how people should say things. This distinction between the descriptive function of grammar and a system of evaluating choices of expression has not always been honored in the curriculum of secondary-school English. A prescriptive attitude has more often characterized the high-school teacher's approach to the English program. Textbooks in use often contain lists of words and expressions to be avoided, and high-school graduates bring to their freshman college English courses a set of "Don't's" in language usage that have dubious relevance to factual linguistic studies. Many of these proscriptions are simple carryovers from the eighteenth-century grammarians.

Whence comes this idea of correctness in language? Who is to judge such correctness? At what point in history does an expression
in a dynamically changing language cease being "correct" and become "incorrect"? Does a commitment to linguistics mean that "anything goes" in language? In short, the problem of standards in English usage is a vitally important but greatly misunderstood part of language study that involves different beliefs and attitudes. The rules of Greek and Latin grammar cannot provide the means of an effective language program in English. Authority, reason, analogy -- all the various criteria for measuring correctness since the eighteenth century -- prove equally ineffective. Many linguists feel that only the criterion of usage can provide the instrumentality by which better craftsmen of language will be produced. As Fries' study of American English grammar leads him to observe: "To be really effective a language program must prepare the pupil for independent growth, and the only possible means of accomplishing that end is to lead him to become an intelligent observer of language usage."¹¹ This task of intelligent observation of language usage is a formidable one. Differences in language practice cannot be simply classified into "correct" or "incorrect" categories. To do so obscures the real complexities of linguistic phenomena. The modern point of view toward correctness is exemplified by Jespersen, who appreciates quite fully the task at hand:

It has been my endeavour in this work to represent English grammar not as a set of stiff dogmatic precepts, according to which some things are correct and others absolutely wrong, but as something living

and developing under continual fluctuations and undulations, something that is founded on the past and prepared the way for the future, something that is not always consistent or perfect, but progressing and perfectible -- in one word, human.... One may observe how each linguistic phenomenon inevitably presents blurred outlines, perfectly sharp delineations being found rather in our imperfect attempts to interpret nature than in nature itself.\[12\]

Jespersen's point of view about correctness is not so widespread as linguists would wish it to be. For many school programs have been based upon authoritarian statements about language usage. Locutions are either correct forms or mistakes, mistakes being departures from grammatical rules or principles. The remedy, according to those who hold this attitude, is simple: Eliminate the errors by drilling the rules and principles of grammar more thoroughly. The perversion of cause and effect here is total, for grammar depends upon usage -- not usage upon grammar. The burden of Chapter IV therefore is to trace the historical confusion over the role in language played by the concept of correctness and to suggest a teaching approach to usage in conformity with modern scientific analyses of the English language.

Throughout some fifteen centuries of evolution, the English language has absorbed into its wordstock thousands of additional elements, borrowed and invented. The process of word-creation is itself an interesting study, affording the pupil considerable insight into the resourcefulness of his language. Various theories seeking

[\[12\]Otto Jespersen, A Modern English Grammar, p. v.]
to account for the origin of the human phenomenon of creating words have been put forth. Although few people today seriously believe that the "Echoic" or "Bow-wow" theories account for the origin of language, the very existence of such theories shows the innate curiosity of human beings about linguistic questions. However language begins, it grows by means of various word-formation processes: compounding, derivation, functional shift, and coinages of writers are the more well known; gradation, back-formation, shortening, blending, and acronyms, also important, are less obvious devices.

The study of the English language, viewed as a product of history, can yield profitable dividends to pupils willing to invest the time and the effort. At the present time, there appears to be no major emphasis given in secondary-school English programs to the consideration of the substantial material developed by historical linguistics. A study of the historical evolution of the English language and the resources of its wordstock would enrich the secondary-school program.

But words are more than clothing for our thoughts; they are an intimate part of the thought-making process. They are often instrumental, it is true, in revealing our social class, much as our choice of clothing fashion does. But few people concern themselves with the relation of thought and language. The noted anthropologist and philosopher Sapir, on the contrary, "is strongly of the opinion that the feeling entertained by so many that they can think, or even
reason, without language is an illusion.¹³ Our attempts to establish relationships among our impressions of reality involve a searching for meaning of and through linguistic symbols. Meaning is important to the linguistic analyst, although his successful technique of using nonsense structures to demonstrate the English devices of function words, word order, and inflections sometimes obscures this fact. Most often, for example, the linguist seeks the differential meaning of words by asking a native speaker whether a given pair of words are the "same" or "different." Another useful procedure is the substitution technique. In this method native speakers produce a list of substitutions for a given locution, frequency of occurrence then determining the most probable or the "right" substitute.¹⁴

Helping pupils to learn the meaning of new words has always been a recognized function of secondary-school English programs. Sometimes teachers have simply distributed lists of words to be checked in the dictionary for pronunciation and definition. This procedure not only underestimates the need for motivation but it also overestimates the role a dictionary ought to play in an intelligently directed English class. More attention might better be paid to the semantic triangle of Ogden and Richards: symbol, referent, and thought or reference.¹⁵ Reducing the meaning of words to their actual referents

¹³Sapir, op. cit., p. 15.
¹⁴Archibald Hill, Introduction to Linguistic Structures, p. 112.
helps pupils to narrow down the specific denotations of words wherever possible. Concrete experience as a principle of learning has long ago proved itself to be sound psychology.

Emotive language -- the slanted or loaded word -- beleaguers the American public from various strongholds. Newspapers, magazines, radio, and television all assail their audiences with words calculated to effect a desired response. An unthinking citizenry may fall prey to such onslaughts. The secondary schools ought to alert their pupils to the need for a critical analysis of all claims, whether they appear in advertisements, journalistic generalizations and descriptions, or speeches. A word like "inspection" denotes one thing in the United States, another in Russia. It also connotes different understandings in the respective countries. Chapter V undertakes to deal with the vast impact upon vocabulary enrichment in the secondary-school English program that a knowledge of the principles of semantics can exert.

English has been taught in American schools since their founding, and it is today the most required course in the secondary school. Present-day programs differ considerably from their predecessors in that they are more likely to be organized to meet the needs of today's school population, which has also undergone profound changes. But the vast scholarship in English language analysis of recent decades does not receive adequate attention in today's program. This paper therefore seeks to suggest ways of including the truths of linguistic science in the language arts program of the secondary school.
CHAPTER II
THE PARTS OF SPEECH

An important proportion of the language study that is undertaken in secondary-school English classes is concerned with that body of grammatical lore known as parts of speech. The typical treatment of these elements preserves, to a surprisingly large extent, the original thinking of the ancient Greeks and Romans. It was the Greeks who, in their study of their own language, first discovered that words may be grouped into a limited number of classes. These classes, together with such syntactic constructions as subject and predicate, were defined "not in terms of recognizable linguistic forms, but in abstract terms which were to tell the meaning of the linguistic class."¹ Full expositions of these doctrines appeared in the grammars of Dionysius Thrax in the second century B.C. and of Apollonius Dyscolus in the second century A.D. That of Thrax has even been called "the most influential book in the Western culture after the Bible."²

The Romans, great respecters of Greek originality, modeled Latin grammars on the Greek prototype. "The most famous of these, the work of Donatus (fourth century A.D.) and of Priscian (sixth century A.D.)," Bloomfield alleges, "remained in use as text-books

¹Leonard Bloomfield, Language, p. 5.
through the Middle Ages. It was these grammars, little improved upon, that served as models for the work of the eighteenth-century grammarians. The prescriptive grammars produced by these writers leaned more heavily on philosophical concepts than on the language in actual use at the time. Karl Dykema makes this pessimistic summary:

This, then, is what has happened. Western grammar starts as a phase of Greek intellectual exploration. It is a late phase, a part of the dusky Hellenistic afterglow, and is inadequate even as an analysis of Greek. Its adaptation to Latin weakens it, it is confused with philosophy in its transmission to modern Europe, and for us it finally becomes the basis for a rigidly prescriptive treatment of English.

From this gloomy tradition, then, developed a number of terms and concepts that still receive considerable attention in the study of English grammar -- the so called parts of speech.

In The Sophists, Plato apparently was the first in Western history to distinguish the noun (onoma) from the verb (rhema). Aristotle then added the notion of a conjunction (syndesmos); other Greek philosophers discovered further classes of words; and finally Dionysius Thrax was able to record eight parts of speech in his grammar. This list, through the medium of the Latin

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3 Bloomfield, op. cit., p. 6.
4 Karl Dykema, op. cit., p. 8.
Since Latin had no article, the Romans dropped "articulus" as a translation of the Greek "arthron" and substituted "interiectio."

In the Middle Ages the distinction between "noun substantive" and "noun adjective" was made, but that remarkably little else differed from the original listing of Thrax is evident from this entry of the monumental *New English Dictionary* defining "part of speech" in 1909:

> Each of the grammatical categories or classes of words as determined by the kind of notion or relation which they express in the sentence.

> Usually reckoned as eight, viz. noun or substantive, adjective, pronoun, verb, adverb, preposition, conjunction, interjection (sometimes as nine, the article being reckoned separately from the adjective). Formerly the participle was often reckoned as a distinct 'part'.

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For over a score of centuries, therefore, from the time of the early Greek philosophers to the twentieth century, the grammatical categories that evolved historically into a description of English words have remained virtually unchanged. Observations made about the Greek language, or about Latin, are not necessarily invalid for English. Since these three languages sprang from a common ancestor, Indo-European, they are somewhat related, a fact that implies the possibility, if not the likelihood, of their sharing common structures and forms. When one takes into account the tremendous changes shown in the development of modern English from Germanic, in the evolution of Homeric Greek into the present vernacular, in the transition of Latin into the Romance Languages, however, one must distrust the applicability of a generalization about one language to the structure of another. The highly inflected Greek and Latin noun, verb, and adjective are scarcely comparable to their relatively invariable English counterparts. Certainly no amount of minute study of the structure of Greek and Latin would enable one to deduce the existence of the fairly stable word order in contemporary English. In Greek and Latin the parts of speech are distinguished according to the forms of those words. On what basis are the parts of speech distinguished in English?

The theory of parts of speech was ignored by the vast majority of grammarians who sought to improve the English language by regulating it with the grammatical descriptions of the Latin grammar.
The Latin parts of speech became the English parts of speech. In his compendious work, *The Grammar of English Grammars*, in 1859, Goold Brown defined the ten parts of speech thus:

1. The Article.
   An Article is the word the, an, or a, which we put before nouns to limit their signification...

2. The Noun.
   A Noun is the name of any person, place, or thing, that can be known or mentioned...

3. The Adjective.
   An Adjective is a word added to a noun or pronoun, and generally expresses quality...

4. The Pronoun.
   A Pronoun is a word used in stead of a noun...

5. The Verb.
   A Verb is a word that signifies to be, to act, or to be acted upon...

6. The Participle.
   A Participle is a word derived from a verb, participating the properties of a verb, and of an adjective or a noun; and is generally formed by adding ing, d, or ed to the verb.

7. The Adverb.
   An Adverb is a word added to a verb, a participle, an adjective, or an other adverb; and generally expresses time, place, degree, or manner...

8. The Conjunction.
   A Conjunction is a word used to connect words or sentences in construction, and to show the dependence of the terms so connected...

   A Preposition is a word used to express some relation of different things or thoughts to each other, and is generally placed before a noun or a pronoun...
10. The Interjection.

An Interjection is a word that is uttered merely to indicate some strong or sudden emotion of the mind... 7

Brown was simply passing along the definitions worked out for a language other than English, a practice in which the eighteenth-century grammarians had preceded him. No attempt was made to describe the classes of words as they were used in the English language at that time. The magnetism of Latin clarity, however, proved too strong an attraction for these English grammarians to overcome. They were never able to study their own language without the vision of this Latin brilliance before them.

Nor has this tradition ended, though its strength may be diminishing. A popular high-school series, published in 1958, includes the following definitions in its section on recognizing the parts of speech:

A verb is a word or a group of words that shows (a) action or (b) a state of being.

A noun is the name of a person, a place, or a thing.

A pronoun is a word that takes the place of a noun.

An adjective is a word that points out, describes, or limits the meaning of a noun or pronoun.

An adverb modifies, or affects, the meaning of a verb, an adjective, or another adverb.

A preposition is a word that shows relationship between a noun or a pronoun and some other word in the sentence.

A conjunction is a word that joins words, phrases, or clauses.

An interjection is a word or a word group that shows feeling.

Though no longer listed as separate parts of speech, the article and the participle are defined in the English texts mentioned above in the fashion of Goold Brown: "The articles a, an, and the are classed as adjectives," probably because they "help you decide whether a word is a noun" when they can appear before it and make sense. "A participle used as an adjective," the authors later mention, "is a verbal adjective; that is, an adjective made from a verb."  

Thus the history of one school of grammarians and textbook writers shows that there has been general agreement about the treatment of parts of speech in English for hundreds of years. It is not difficult to understand why these elements were defined so uniformly for such a length of time. There was no language scholarship, in the modern sense, at that time. Writers of handbooks and grammars did not observe actual usage about them, but instead they transmitted the accumulated heritage of language pronouncements that traced back to the ancient Greeks and Romans. It is not clear that the grammarians of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries even appreciated the fact that the same words could be used as different parts of speech. Their naivete is unwittingly depicted in this footnote from


9Ibid., pp. 255, 251, 342.
Goold Brown, wherein he summarizes pronouncements concerning the wordstock of English:

"The whole number of verbs in the English language, regular and irregular, simple and compounded, taken together, is about 4,300. See, in Dr. Ward’s Essays on the English language, the catalogue of English verbs, The whole number of irregular verbs, the defective included, is about 176." —Lowth’s Gram., Philad., 1799, p. 59. Lindley Murray copied the first and last of these three sentences, but made the latter number "about 177." —Octavo Gram., p. 109; Duodecimo., p. 98. In the latter work, he has this note: "The whole number of words, in the English language is about thirty-five thousand." —Ib. Churchill says, "The whole number of verbs in the English language, according to Dr. Ward, is about 4,300. The irregulars, including the auxiliaries, scarcely exceed 200." —New Gram., p. 113. An other late author has the following enumeration: "There are in the English language about twenty thousand five hundred nouns, forty pronouns, eight thousand verbs, nine thousand two hundred adverbs, two thousand six hundred adverbs, sixty-nine prepositions, nineteen conjunctions, and sixty-eight interjections; in all, above forty thousand words." —Rev. David Blair’s Gram., p. 10. William Ward, M.Z., in an old grammar undated, which speaks of Dr. Lowth’s as one with which the public had "very lately been favoured," says: "There are four thousand and about five Hundred Verbs in the English Language." —Ward’s Practical Gram., p. 52.10

Today’s textbooks commonly require that a word be used in a sentence before it can be designated as a particular part of speech.

Despite this great harmony shown in defining the parts of speech, however, the definitions themselves never did provide pupils with the means to recognize the parts of speech. The statement, "A noun is the name of a person, place, or thing" merely says "A

10Goold Brown, op. cit., p. 221.
name is a name," since "noun" from the Latin "nomen," is "name."

A word that expresses, or names, an action is traditionally called a verb; as the "name" of an action, however, it qualifies as a noun. "An adjective is a word that points out, describes, or limits the meaning of a noun or pronoun." In "The boy stands," "stands" limits the meaning of "boy," but is to be understood as a verb and not an adjective. In "The sky is blue," "blue," the "name" of a color is to be taken as an adjective, not as a noun. The concept "noun" itself being elusive, the statement that "a pronoun is a word that takes the place of a noun" must fail to edify. "A preposition is a word that shows relationship between a noun or a pronoun and some other word in the sentence." In "He hates dogs," "hates," which shows the relationship between the pronoun "he" and the noun "dogs," is taken to be a verb, not a preposition. In "He fell down," though "down" is the name of a direction, it is considered an adverb, not a noun, because it modifies the verb "fell." "A conjunction is a word that joins words, phrases, or clauses." In the preceding sentence, "is" joins or connects "conjunction" and "word" but is considered of course a verb and not a conjunction. "An interjection is a word or a word group that shows feeling." But "Don't fire until you see the whites of their eyes!" and the poetry of Wordsworth, though emotional word groups, are not interjections. The shortcomings of these definitions have helped to make the study of English grammar tedious and profitless for many pupils. Only the fact that
teachers of English grammar have seldom relied solely on these definitions as criteria for identifying parts of speech keeps this system of classification alive. In practice, teachers use a variety of examples to fix these categories in the minds of their pupils.

The standard eight-part classification has an inherent weakness: It is inconsistently oriented. The noun, verb, and interjection are defined according to what they mean; the pronoun, adjective, adverb, preposition, and conjunction are defined according to what they do in sentences. This mixture of meaning and function results in a confused treatment of a number of locutions. In the phrase, "newspaper advertisement," is "newspaper" a noun because it is the name of a thing or is it an adjective because it modifies "advertisement"? In the sentence, "The girl lost her book," is "her" a pronoun because it takes the place of the noun "girl" or is it an adjective modifying "book"? The functions themselves are not always discrete. In "I saw the man who broke the record," is "who" a pronoun because it takes the place of the noun or is it a conjunction because it connects the two clauses?

Webster's New International Dictionary, moreover, introduces some unusual divisions of function in its discussion of "parts of speech": "In English grammar, words of variable form appear as typical parts of speech where the word form takes the function in the sentence that is expected of it (the man gives thanks) and as
unusual parts of speech where the word form takes an unexpected function (men milliners, the joint has no give). This curious observation does not indicate whether it is to be the speaker or the listener who is governed by the "expected." Nor is it clear what a "typical" or "unusual" part of speech may be, if indeed such exists.

Though the traditional classification of parts of speech was not soundly organized, for a long time there was nothing available to teachers to substitute for it. That situation no longer is true. Paul Roberts notes the transition:

I have no intention here of attacking or ridiculing the older ways of presenting the English language in the schools. The tradition contains much that is true and much that is valuable. Teachers working with it have often achieved very good results. Certainly no one need apologize for using the only materials available.

The development of the science of language, however—and particularly its rapid progress during and since World War II—has made a difference. The writings of the linguistic scientists have rather thoroughly demolished the foundation on which the tradition has rested these last two hundred years. Fundamental tenets which only yesterday seemed unassailable are today not seriously defended by anybody. The textbooks continue to present a quasi-logical view of the structure of the language, but I don't know of any serious student of language--anyone who makes the study of language his business--who would uphold this view.\textsuperscript{12}

Important contributions to this new development in America have been made by such scholars as Edward Sapir, Leonard Bloomfield, Charles

\textsuperscript{11}Webster's New International Dictionary, p. 1784. 
Carpenter Fries, George Trager, Henry Lee Smith, Benjamin Lee Whorf, James Sledd, W. Nelson Francis, John B. Carroll, H. A. Gleason, Zellig S. Harris, Charles Hockett, Archibald Hill, Noam Chomsky, Paul Roberts, and Harold Whitehall. The new method of describing language has already been tested in the field on the exotic speech patterns of various American Indian tribes. Having perfected its techniques by analyzing primitive language materials, the fledgling science was able to pierce through the fog of misconception and prejudice that enveloped the study of language. Fresh views were taken of familiar languages, and the results were likewise novel. The individual elements of a language were now examined inductively as linguists made a conscious effort to preclude the reliance on the conventional categories of other languages. For it had been the adoption of such ready-made classes from the Greek and Latin examples that for so long obscured the real structure of English.

But the knowledge of other languages and their structures was an important tool of the American linguist. Such comprehension made him suspicious of the notion of a universal grammar or necessary form classes. It enabled Sapir, in a book that ranks as a classic in American linguistics, Language, to point out the shaky philosophical underpinnings propping up the traditional view of parts of speech:

Our conventional classification of words into parts of speech is only a vague, wavering approximation to a consistently worked out inventory of experience. We imagine, to begin with, that all "verbs" are inherently concerned with action as such, that a "noun" is the
name of some definite object or personality that can be pictured by the mind, that all qualities are necessarily expressed by a definite group of words to which we may appropriately apply the term "adjective." As soon as we test our vocabulary, we discover that the parts of speech are far from corresponding to so simple an analysis of reality. We say "it is red" and define "red" as a quality-word or adjective. We should consider it strange to think of an equivalent of "is red" in which the whole predication (adjective and verb of being) is conceived of as verb in precisely the same way in which we think of "extends" or "lies" or "sleeps" as a verb. Yet as soon as we give the "durative" notion of being red an inceptive or transitional turn, we can avoid the parallel form "it becomes red, it turns red" and say "it reddens." No one denies that "reddens" is as good a verb as "sleeps" or even "walks." Yet "it is red" is related to "it reddens" very much as is "he stands" to "he stands up" or "he rises." It is merely a matter of English or of general Indo-European idiom that we cannot say "it reds" in the sense of "it is red." There are hundreds of languages that can. Indeed there are many that can express what we should call an adjective only by making a participle out of a verb. "Red" in such languages is merely a derivative "being red," as our "sleeping" or "walking" are derivatives of primary verbs.¹³

Thus the notion that distinctions between various parts of speech were analogous to distinctions in thought was rejected. A part of speech is determined by the syntactic form it has in a specific language; therefore, "no logical scheme of the parts of speech--their number, nature, and necessary confines--is of the slightest interest to the linguist."¹⁴

Leonard Bloomfield, through his scholarly study, *Language*, published in 1933, has profoundly influenced every American linguist who succeeded him. The book itself has become a landmark in the

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¹⁴Ibid., p. 119.
history of American linguistics. Bloomfield's observations about the philosophical aspects of the parts of speech endorse those of Sapir:

Our knowledge of the practical world may show that some linguistic categories agree with classes of real things. It may be, for instance, that our non-linguistic world consists of objects, actions, qualities, manners, and relations, comparable with the substantives, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and prepositions of our language. In this case it would still be true, however, that many other languages do not recognize these classes in their part-of-speech system. Moreover, we should still have to determine the English parts of speech not by their correspondence with different aspects of the practical world, but merely by their functions in English syntax.15

The movement to study and identify the contrastive patterns in which words operate in English syntax signaled the break with the logically conceived categories of the past. American schools, meanwhile, were becoming dissatisfied with the barrenness of the study of "formal grammar," which was characterized by the memorization of rules and definitions, parsing, and diagramming. The teaching of grammar became, in reaction, more functional. A frontal attack was launched to remove the errors from pupils' speech and writing by the selective teaching of useful items from the grammar. Sentence analysis lost its preeminent position in English instruction as functional drills -- those by which the language habits of the pupils might be improved -- were substituted. The gain in effective pupil expression, where that goal was achieved by skillful teaching, was offset by the failure to develop an appreciation of the system by which words convey their meaning.

For it is the system, the structure, the patterns of English that the modern scientific grammarians emphasize. Their approach is inductive; the data are taken from the living, spoken language rather than from the literature; and the definitions are formal, that is, based on form: sounds in the spoken language, spelling (usually phonetic) in the written. Within the last ten years, a wealth of linguistic scholarship has been published that ought to be carefully studied by every teacher, or prospective teacher, of language, and especially of English. An examination of some linguists' works should serve to illustrate the methodology and accomplishment of this new grammar. Because they are important and representative, the following three are selected: Charles C. Fries, The Structure of English; James Sledd, A Short Introduction to Grammar; and W. Nelson Francis, The Structure of American English.

The seminal work of the group is The Structure of English. In many ways, Fries has broken most sharply with conventional treatment of grammar, especially so in his sections on parts of speech. Since the usual school definitions of these parts of speech seemed to Fries to be inadequate, he rejected the traditional terminology completely. He designates the four parts of speech that he recognizes as Class 1, Class 2, Class 3, or Class 4 words. These form classes must be identified, he maintains, because they help unravel the complexities of word order, a singularly important device for conveying meaning in modern English:

We have insisted that unless these functioning units, these parts of speech, are clearly marked, are
identifiable in an utterance, some type of structural ambiguity will result. The ambiguity of the following utterances, for example, arises because of the uncertainty of the kind of functioning unity of each of the italic words:

Ship sails today

Time flies

The dogs looked longer than the cat

Avoid infection by killing germs

The ambiguity of these sentences is removed when the proper use of structural signals is made. "Ship sails today" can be rephrased either "Ship the sails today," a command, or "The ship sails today," a statement. Native speakers of English learn to recognize the distinctions among the various parts of speech at a reasonably early age, or they would not get the meaning of completed utterances. They are seldom able, however, to describe the distinctive marks that signal these differences. The description of these marks, then, becomes an important task of the inductive grammarian.

The procedure invented by the linguists to discover the form classes of a language is to substitute words in frames. One of the frames used by Fries, for example, is "The concert was good." Any word that can substitute for "concert" in this frame is by that fact a word like "concert." A word than can replace "was" in the frame is likewise a word like "was," and the same analogy holds true for the other positions of the frame. An important stipulation imposed

upon this method is that the resultant frame must be the same, not different, after each substitution. Meaning, to this extent, plays a vital role in the process:

The use of the technique of substitution in investigation always demands control of certain features of "meaning." The investigator must, in some way, either through an informant or by using his own knowledge, control enough of a particular kind of meaning to determine whether the frame is the "same" or "different" after any substitution is made. In the substitution process used here a knowledge of the lexical meanings of the words is unnecessary; a control of the structural meaning of each frame used is essential.... Of course, the object of our search here is not the meaning but the strictly formal features which make a difference in the "meaning."17

As proof that the lexical meanings of words need not be known, Fries cites the poem of the Jabberwocky:

Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe....

The really important words are indefinably nonsense, "but any speaker of English will recognize at once the frames in which these words appear."18 The stanza abounds with signals:

Twas _____, and the _____ y _____
Did _____ and _____ in the _____;
All _____ y were the _____ s,
And the _____ s _______.

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17Ibid., footnote, pp. 74-75.
18Ibid., p. 70.
A word like "sunny" could occupy the blank after "Twas"; one like "sunnily" or "because" could not. The latter therefore cannot be of the same form class as "brillig," but the former may be. For this particular frame becomes "different" when "sunnily" is substituted for "brillig," and remains the "same" when "sunny," or "he," or "evening," or "raining" is so used. Obviously the fact that many kinds of words can be placed in the frame without making it "different" indicates that this particular frame, "Twas ______," does not contain sufficient structural clues to assign one class of words to the blank.

Fries then proceeds to a descriptive analysis of his materials, which "were primarily some fifty hours of mechanically recorded conversations on a great range of topics -- conversations in which the participants were entirely unaware that their speech was being recorded." Here are the four classes of words he identified, and the frames by which he made the identifications:

**Words of Class 1**

Frame A

(The) _______ is/was good
are/were good

Coffee is good
Sugar is good
Reports were good

---

19Ibid., p. 3.
Frame B

The ________ remembered the ________
clerk
husband
supervisor
woman
tax
food
coffee
container
difference
family

Frame C

The ________ went there
team
husband
woman
supervisor

Words of Class 2

Frame A

Class 1 Class 2 Class 1
(The) ______ is/was good (the) ______ remembered (the) ______
______s are/were good ______s wanted ______s
seems/seemed
seem
sounds/sounded
sound...

Frame B

Class 1 Class 2 Class 1
(The) ______ remembered (the) ______
______s wanted ______s
saw
discussed
suggested...
### Frame C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(The) ____ went there
____ s
 came ran
 started moved...

### Words of Class 3

### Frame A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(The) good _____ is/was good
____ s are/were large
necessary
foreign
new...

### Words of Class 4

### Frame A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(The) ____ is/was ____ there
____ s are/were here
always
then
sometimes
suddenly...

### Frame B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(The) ____ remembered (the) ____ clearly
sufficiently
especially
repeatedly
soon...
Frame C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class 1</th>
<th>Class 2</th>
<th>Class 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(The)___</td>
<td>went</td>
<td>there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>back</td>
<td>upstairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>out</td>
<td>away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>up</td>
<td>rapidly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>eagerly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the words in Fries materials can be classed in the four parts of speech noted above. The exact percentage varies according to the method of computing used:

If each "word" is counted every time it occurs, then these four parts of speech contain approximately 67 per cent of the total instances of the vocabulary items. If, however, each "word" is counted only once and repeated instances of the same word ignored, then, in the material of 1,000 different words, the percentage of the total vocabulary in these four parts of speech is over 93 per cent.21

Speech consists in the main, therefore, of groupings of these four classes of words. The ability to recognize the form class of each word is necessary if the pattern, or arrangement, of these words is to be understood.

In addition to their characteristic position in frames, the four parts of speech have certain formal features which distinguish them from one another and from other words. There are other words, however, which do not belong to any of the four form classes and

20Ibid., pp. 76-84.
21Ibid., p. 86.
which do not have distinctive traits. These words must be learned separately as simple vocabulary items. They are important because they help signal the appearance of words of the form classes. Called "function words" by Fries, these words make up fifteen groups:

Group A: Words like the, before a Class 1 word.

Group B: Words like may, before a Class 2 word.

Group C: The word not as in "The concert may not be good."

Group D: Words like very, before a Class 3 word.

Group E: Words like and, between the same parts of speech.

Group F: Words like at, which are followed by Class 1 words but may follow words of Class 1, Class 2, or Class 3.

Group G: The words do, does, did when used to make a question sentence or a negative statement.

Group H: The word there when unstressed, as in "There is a man at the door."

Group I: Words like when, signals of question sentences, as in "When was the concert good?"

Group J: Words like after which introduce included sentences.

Group K: The words well, oh, now, why, which seem merely to provide a starting syllable for the sentence.

Group L: The words yes and no, also at the beginning of the sentence.

Group M: The words look, say, and listen, attention-getting signals at the beginnings of sentences.

Group N: The word please, used in request sentences.

Group O: The form lets, also used in request sentences, but ones that include the speaker.22

22 Ibid., pp. 88-103.
Though these groups of function words are more numerous than the classes of parts of speech, the number of individual words in the groups is quite low compared to the number of words that are the parts of speech. Vocabulary items in English, moreover, tend to be added as parts of speech; the function words have remained relatively stable.

The traditional classification of all words into eight or so parts of speech would be completely overturned by Fries. He would totally reject the conclusion reached by Rudolf Magnusson, for example, in his *Studies in the Theory of the Parts of Speech*: "I should say that most of the old theory of parts of speech has proved to be quite correct. Whether it came into existence thanks to logical deduction or in some other way, it is certainly so ingenious that there is no reason for throwing it overboard." This observation misses the modern scientific approach to language. The justification for maintaining a parts-of-speech classification should certainly not be that such a system is "ingenious." The criterion is rather "Does the classification accurately describe the patterns of words by which effective communication with other native speakers of the language is secured?" Furthermore, a scientific grammarian does not proceed in "logical" fashion, that is, from mind to material. He examines the material, words in this case, to discover by what formal marks they convey meaning.

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Despite their insistence that form determines meaning, linguists are unable to agree on the number and labels of the form classes variously discovered. Whereas Fries recognizes four parts of speech and fifteen groups of function words, for example, James Sledd lists two sets of parts of speech and twelve positional classes. The sets of parts of speech are to be handled in this manner:

The first parts of speech which we will define are classes of words, and in defining them we will use the distinction between derivational and inflectional suffixes. We will then establish a second set of classes, to which not only items containing single bases but items containing two bases or more may also typically belong.  

The first method of definition assigns the individual words of the lexicon to various parts of speech classes according to the inflectional series that the word displays. A word which has no inflections, like "about," is not recognized as a part of speech. The second method of definition assigns words, as well as phrases and clauses, according to the positions they occupy in sentences. The two methods of identifying parts of speech thus produce two different sets of classes. Such apparent lack of unanimity need not be interpreted as a sign of weakness in the analysis of descriptive grammar. The inductive method of this new science, together with its insistence that form determines meaning and thereby deserves primary study, is a sure foundation on which a solid grammatical system can be built.

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24 James Sledd, A Short Introduction to English Grammar, p. 68.
Most linguists, moreover, would agree with Sledd that "the conventional schoolroom grammar is defective and must be brought more nearly in line with the principles and methods of contemporary linguistics." Most teachers know the "conventional schoolroom grammar"; few are aware of the accomplishments of linguistic science. Sledd's grammar is one more attempt to reverse this uneven balance of knowledge, and he himself is quite specific about what is needed:

... it seems to follow from all this that not merely one or two but a number of interim textbooks are needed. They should embody careful efforts to maintain some continuity in learning and teaching, to avoid the mere substitution of new dogma for old, and (since they must seek approval not only from grammarians) to show both the extrinsic and the intrinsic value of English grammar: some emphasis on practical applications is necessary. Compromise with ignorance or bigotry is not necessary. This particular textbook is one attempt, undoubtedly quite imperfect, to meet the demands of the present situation; but its writer does not believe that a prudential mixture of supposed truth with known falsehood is a workable transition from anything to anything. He has tried to relate his description of English to other descriptions in less ambiguous ways.

The followers of Fries have become rather intent upon affecting the English curricula with the new descriptive analyses. And in numbers there is strength.

In the parts-of-speech classification developed by Fries, the recorded materials severely limited the scope of the investigation. No other materials were used to illustrate the form classes of the

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25 Ibid., p. 9.
26 Ibid.
function groups. The description was intended, nevertheless, to identify those structural signals of utterances that native speakers of English readily understand in the act of communicating. Sledd does not limit himself to a body of mechanically preserved speech items, nor in fact do most linguists. An important assumption that most of them make is that native informants, themselves included, have a wealth of language information from which sound conclusions can be drawn, provided that proper methods are used. In their writings, linguists frequently make judgments about language usage or pronunciation in the form "Not in my dialect." The classifications evolved by various linguists, therefore, are likely also to lack perfect congruence.

Among the many differences between the classifications of parts of speech by Fries and by Sledd is one of nomenclature. Striving to maintain that continuity between learning and teaching, Sledd returns to some traditional terms in place of Fries's numbering system. For one set, Sledd uses noun, pronoun, verb, adjective, and adverb; for another, nominal, verbal, adjectival, and adverbial. Though the terms themselves are familiar, the classes of items they signify are not the same as those designated by the traditional names. A brief excursion into Sledd's treatment of parts of speech will bring out the difference.

The first set of parts of speech is defined by Sledd according to the kinds of suffixes they possess; inflectional suffixes
distinguish the noun, pronoun, verb, and adjective, while derivational suffixes establish the adverb.

**Noun**

A noun is any word that has contrasting forms for singular and plural numbers, or for common and genitive cases, or for both.

*Man, man's, men, men's and boy, boy's, boys, boys' are inflectional series that identify man and boy as nouns.*

*Chaos, which does not pattern in an inflectional series, is not a noun.*

**Pronoun**

Inflection identifies the following as pronouns:

**Singular**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Object</th>
<th>1st pos-</th>
<th>2nd pos-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>form</td>
<td>form</td>
<td>sessive</td>
<td>sessive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First person</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>me</td>
<td>my</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second person</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third person</td>
<td>he</td>
<td>him</td>
<td>his</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>she</td>
<td>her</td>
<td>her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>it</td>
<td>it</td>
<td>its</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuter</td>
<td></td>
<td>who</td>
<td>whom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Plural**

| First person | you | us | our | ours |
| Second person | you | you | your | yours |
| Third person   | they | them | their | theirs |

**Verb**

A verb is any word belonging to an inflectional series which marks the difference between present
and past tense. Verbs usually pattern into these forms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base</th>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Past</th>
<th>Past Participle</th>
<th>Present Participle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>make</td>
<td>makes</td>
<td>made</td>
<td>made</td>
<td>making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>say</td>
<td>says</td>
<td>said</td>
<td>said</td>
<td>saying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be</td>
<td>am</td>
<td>was</td>
<td>been</td>
<td>being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>are</td>
<td>were</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>is</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Must and ought, which do not have distinguishing forms for present and past tense, and which do not pattern in any inflectional series, cannot be considered verbs.

**Adjectives**

An adjective is any word that can be compared by the addition of inflectional suffixes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive degree</th>
<th>Comparative degree</th>
<th>Superlative degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tall</td>
<td>taller</td>
<td>tallest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quick</td>
<td>quicker</td>
<td>quickest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>smooth</td>
<td>smoother</td>
<td>smoothest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good</td>
<td>better</td>
<td>best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bad</td>
<td>worse</td>
<td>worst</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Words like beautiful, beneficial, outrageous..., which are not compared by the addition of suffixes, cannot be considered adjectives.

**Adverb**

An adverb is a word formed by the addition of the suffix -ly to the positive degree form of the adjective, provided that the resulting word cannot itself be compared. Kind and -ly thus form kindly, a word that is compared kindlier, kindliest, and is by definition therefore an adjective, not an adverb. Quick and -ly, however, form quickly, a word that cannot be compared quicklier/quickliest. Only words formed like quickly are adverbs.
Words like beautifully, beneficially, outrageously..., which are not formed from the positive degrees of adjectives, cannot be considered adverbs.

The five parts of speech so distinguished by their inflectional and derivational endings apply only to words as words. Once these words are used in structures of any kind, a new set of parts of speech operates. It is the position of these words in utterances of various kinds that determines their classification. This distinction is basic in Sledd's grammar and is, in fact, his major refinement of Fries's analysis. According to their endings, most words belong to one of five classes: noun, pronoun, verb, adjective, or adverb.

The word man, simply as a word, is always a noun; the members of the other classes are always the same parts of speech when considered as individual words. As soon as words are combined into meaningful patterns, however, they can be classified into four main or eight minor positional categories: nominals, verbals, adjectivals, and adverbials; or determiners, prepositions, conjunctions, relatives, interrogatives, intensive-reflexives, auxiliaries, and adverbials of degree.

In much the manner of Fries, then, Sledd must establish the characteristically important positions of English sentences by devising a series of test frames for the words of the lexicon. In doing so, Sledd relies more heavily on matters of pitch, stress, and juncture than does Fries. Linguists have quite thoroughly worked out the "superfixes" of pitch, stress, and juncture. These
intonation features have become fairly well standardized in linguistics: the four pitch points are noted phonemically (between diagonal lines) as /4/ for the highest pitch; /3/ for the next to highest; /2/ for the next to lowest; and /1/ for the lowest. Stress, the loudness or softness with which speakers pronounce words, has also four varieties: primary, the loudest stress; secondary, the next to loudest; tertiary, the next to softest; and weak, the softest. Juncture, or the pause that interrupts the speech flow, can similarly be divided into four types: plus juncture, the shortest pause; single bar juncture, the next to shortest; double bar juncture, the next to longest; and double cross juncture, the longest. Junctures are so named after the symbols used to indicate them.27

The following are the parts of speech that Sledd identifies by position:

Nominal

A nominal is any word or word group that can fill any of the blanks in these frames:

_____ seemed good

The _____ seemed good

The _____ considered the _____

The _____ gave the _____ a_____

All these blanks have a primary stress except the second-last one, which has a secondary stress.

27A particularly clear introduction to intonation appears in Paul Roberts, Patterns of English, pp. 227-232.
Verbal

The three testing frames used to identify verbals are listed as sequences of positional classes:

1. Determiner nominal _______ adjectival
2. Determiner nominal _______ determiner nominal
3. Determiner nominal _______ adverbial

Any word or larger form that fills any one of these three blanks is a verbal.

Adjectival

The test frame for the adjectival is exceedingly simple:

determiner _______ noun

Any form under second stress that fills this position between a weakest-stressed determiner and a strongest-stressed noun is ordinarily an adjectival. Sledd makes an important restriction. If the form is a noun he will call it a nominal.

Adverbial

A characteristic position in which adverbials occur is under primary stress after a nominal at the end of a sentence:

The man made money _______

The adverbial position is typically filled by adverbs or other uninflected forms. 28

Most of the words, phrases, and clauses in English fall into these four main positional classes. But many very common words are still

unaccounted for. Consequently, eight smaller positional classes are defined:

**Determiners:** Determiners regularly stand under a tertiary or a weak stress before a following nominal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nominal</th>
<th>Verbal</th>
<th>Adjectival</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Either...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Prepositions:** These forms, which are usually uninflected, regularly occur with tertiary or with weak stress in positions characteristically filled by at, by, for, etc.

**Conjunctions:** Like prepositions, conjunctions receive either tertiary or weak stress and are usually uninflected. Unlike prepositions, conjunctions are not regularly followed by nominals and cannot ordinarily be used at the ends of sentences.

Conjunctions are of three kinds:

1. **Coordinating:** and, but, or, nor, for
2. **Subordinating:** after, although, because, before, if, since, when
3. **Correlative:** either...or, neither...nor, both...and

**Relatives:** The most important members of this class are who, whose, whom, which, and that. Relatives can be distinguished from the preceding class by the kind of agreement in number they show among the antecedent, the relatives, and a following verb:

The students who ask the question feel silly.
The students, when he asks the question, feel silly.
The students, when they ask the question, feel silly.
In the latter two sentences, when has no effect upon the number of asks or ask. But there is a correlation in the first sentence between the number of the antecedent of who and the following verb.

Interrogatives: Words like which, who, and what in sentence-initial position are interrogatives. They usually take secondary or tertiary stress, and, as in "Which man did you see?" cause a distinctive verbal sequence.

Intensives and Reflexives: Words in this class are those forms ending in -self and -selves.

Auxiliaries: Auxiliaries can be identified by their occurrence in these nine patterns, the auxiliaries themselves being those under the A-column:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>have/has/had</td>
<td>past participle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>am/is/are/was/were</td>
<td>present participle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>am/is/are/was/were</td>
<td>past participle of transitive verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have/has/had plus been</td>
<td>past participle of transitive verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have/has/had plus been</td>
<td>present participle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>am/is/are/was/were</td>
<td>past participle of transitive verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>will, would, shall,</td>
<td>any infinitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>should, may, might</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can, could, must</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ought</td>
<td>marked infinitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(&quot;to&quot; is the mark)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do, does, did</td>
<td>unmarked infinitive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Adverbials of Degree: The final positional class is composed of forms that occur before adjectives and adverbials in frames like the following and that take either secondary or tertiary stress:

The game wasn't ______ good.
He went ______ quickly.
The game had been ______ better.

These eight minor classes complete Sledd's outline of parts of speech according to the positions they occupy in his test frames. Like Fries, Sledd has established his grammatical classes on the basis of form, not on semantic content. Sledd's first set of parts of speech, derived according to the inflectional and derivational endings of the words, classifies the vocabulary entries of English. It is in his positional categories that Sledd leans heavily on the Fries technique.

The final important representative work to be considered here is The Structure of American English by W. Nelson Francis. This work is the fullest treatment of structural grammar of the three books, carrying the analysis of Fries to its fullest fruition. Its great contribution to linguistic science is the identification of five signals of syntactic structure:

1. Word Order is the linear or time sequence in which words appear in an utterance.

2. Prosody is the over-all musical pattern of stress, pitch, and juncture in which the words of an utterance are spoken.

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29Ibid., pp. 97-110.
3. **Function Words** are words largely devoid of lexical meaning which are used to indicate various functional relationships among the lexical words of an utterance.

4. **Inflections** are morphemic changes—the addition of suffixes and concomitant morphophonemic adjustments—which adapt words to perform certain structural functions without changing their lexical meaning.

5. **Derivational Contrast** is the contrast between words which have the same base but differ in the number and nature of their derivational affixes.\(^3\)

In the classification of the various parts of speech, only these five formal criteria can be used. Though the signals of inflections and derivational contrast are reminiscent of the methods by which Sledd established one set of parts of speech according to their endings, Francis does not attempt to classify words in isolation. Before a word can be classified, "we must see it in a structure with other words, where the environment will indicate clearly what part of speech it belongs to."\(^3\)

Four different parts of speech are designated by Francis, who uses the traditional terms **noun**, **verb**, **adjective**, and **adverb** for them. As is customary in modern linguistic treatment, however, the traditional terms do not stand for the traditional categories. The structural signals reveal the following classes:

**Nouns**

Nouns are identified by all five of the criteria.

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\(^3\)Ibid., p. 236.
1. Word Order: Position before a verb.

2. Prosody: In distinguishing the noun contract from the verb contract, and in other similar pairs, linguists have discovered that the primary-tertiary stress pattern identifies the noun.

3. Function Words: The most clear-cut markers of nouns are the so-called noun-determiners, which typically precede the noun. The chief noun-determiners are

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Determiner</th>
<th>Determiner</th>
<th>Determiner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the</td>
<td>my</td>
<td>our</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a/an</td>
<td>your</td>
<td>their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>this/these</td>
<td>two...ninety-nine</td>
<td>some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that/those</td>
<td>many (a)</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>his</td>
<td>more</td>
<td>every</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>her</td>
<td>several</td>
<td>(a) few</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>its</td>
<td>both</td>
<td>other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>enough</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Inflections: Nouns have two inflections, the plural and the possessive.

5. Derivational Contrast: Many nouns may be identified by their characteristic derivational suffixes:

a) added to verbs:
   -age: demurage, breakage.
   -ance: conveyance, contrivance.
   -er: boiler, sailor, liar, Sawyer.
   -ee: payee, employee, draftee.
   -ment: payment, agreement, argument.

b) added to adjectives:
   -ce: abundance, convenience, compliance.
   -cy: consistency, relevancy, intricacy.
   -ity: facility, hostility.
   -ness: happiness, boldness, friendliness.
   -ster: youngster, oldster.

c) added to other nouns:
   -cy: advocacy, democracy, captaincy.
   -er: lifer, liner, outfielder.
   -ian: mathematician, librarian.
   -ism: Methodism, monarchism, gangsterism.
   -ist: physicist, violinist, Jansenist.
   -ship: friendship, professorship.
   -ster: gangster, roadster, dopester.
d) added to bound stems:
-er: carpenter, tailor, porter.
-ism: monism, polytheism, communism, Fascism.
-ist: monist, polytheist, communist, Fascist.
-ity: depravity, debility, felicity.

Verbs

Verbs are also identified by all five of the syntactic signals.

1. Word Order: Two important positions may be filled by verbs: (1) utterance-initial position and (2) the position between two nouns. Position alone, however, seldom marks the verb.

2. Prosody: The weak-primary stress pattern distinguishes one group of verbs from related nouns and adjectives: imprint, suspect, import, contract, perfect.

3. Function Words: Auxiliaries, true verb-determiners, combine with verbs to form verb phrases. Auxiliaries fall into four groups, according to the forms of the main verb with which they appear.

a) Auxiliaries appearing with the base form of the verb:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>can/could</th>
<th>will/would</th>
<th>dare</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>may/might</td>
<td>do/does/did</td>
<td>need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shall/should</td>
<td>must</td>
<td>(had) better/best</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Special forms: please, do, let's, and pray.

b) Auxiliaries appearing with the present-participle form of the verb:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>am/is/are/was/were</th>
<th>get/gets/got</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

c) Auxiliaries appearing with the past-participle form of the verb:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>am/is/are/was/were</th>
<th>get/gets/got</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
d) Auxiliaries appearing with the infinitive form of the verb, which consists of "to" plus the base form:

have/has/had
ought
used
am/is/are/was/were
am/is/are/was/were are plus "about" or "going"

4. Inflections: There are four verb inflections, the most elaborate set of inflections used with any of the English parts of speech:

a) The third-singular inflection.
b) The past-tense or preterit inflection.
c) The past-participle inflection.
d) The present-participle inflection.

5. Derivational Contrast: Of the relatively short list of verb-making affixes, six are fairly frequent:

a) -ate - implicate, operate, calumniate.
b) -ize - utilize, recognize, idolize, organize, socialize.
c) -fy - liquefy, indemnify, countrify, beautify.
d) -ish - finish, furnish, languish.
e) -en - blacken, sharpen, heighten, glisten.
f) en- - enfold, enslave, enliven, endure.

Adjectives

Adjectives are identified by four formal criteria, prosody being inoperative for this part of speech.

1. Word Order: The primary identifying quality of adjectives is their ability to occupy both blanks in a frame such as:

   the _______ man seems very _______

The two positions are (1) between noun-determiner and noun and (2) immediately following very or some other such qualifier.
2. Function Words: Qualifiers, which have the function of indicating the degree to which the meaning of the adjective is applicable, appear immediately before an adjective. The final two qualifiers in this list of common ones can also follow the adjective:

very somewhat more enough
quite a bit most indeed
rather a little less
pretty so least
mighty too

3. Inflections: The suffixes -er and -est are used to form the comparative and superlative degrees.

4. Derivational Contrast: Among the more important suffixes forming adjectives are these:

a) -y - faulty, leafy, healthy, rickety, holy.
b) -al - fatal, natural, national, local, physical.
c) -able - remarkable, understandable, viable, visible.
d) -ful and -less - hopeful, hopeless; useful, useless.
e) -ar, -ary, -ic, -ish, and -ous - columnar, popular, regular, legendary, literary, climatic, comic, childish, lavish, marvelous, pernicious.
f) -ent and -ive - abhorrent, convenient, active, native.
g) -en - woolen, waxen, wooden, oaken.
h) -ed - garlanded, overcoated, tired, devoted.
i) -ing - interesting, exciting, revealing, pleasing.
j) -ly - friendly, orderly, homely, mannerly, ugly.

Adverbs

Adverbs, like adjectives, are identified by all the formal criteria except prosody.
1. Word Order: The chief identifying characteristic of adverbs is their ability to fill the blank in this frame:

the man told (us) his story ________

This position is utterance-final following a complement noun or nouns.

2. Function Words: Generally the same qualifiers that mark adjectives are used with adverbs.

3. Inflections: Some adverbs use the suffixes -er and -est to form their comparative and superlative degrees. Identical in form with adjectives are these adverbs:

- slow  slower  slowest
- quick  quicker  quickest
- cheap  cheaper  cheapest
- hard  harder  hardest
- fast  faster  fastest

Irregular adverbs are these:

- well  better  best
- bad(ly)
  ill  worse  worst
- far  further  furthest

4. Derivational Contrast: Several affixes identify adverbs:

a) -ly - hopefully, popularly, strangely, falsely.

b) - ahead, away, aboard, anew, abroad, anon.

c) -wise - lengthwise, actor-wise, personnel-wise.

d) -ward(s) - backward(s), forward(s), homeward(s).

An important but limited group of adverbs is formed by combining the noun-determiners some, any, every, and no
with nouns and function words, as in someplace, anyway, everywhere, nowhere, and so on. Fewer than twenty of these occur in common educated speech.32

These representative samplings of the techniques used by modern linguists and of the results obtained thereby indicate quite dramatically the complete shift in treating grammatical concepts that has revolutionized this phase of language study. The attempt to analyze and understand the structure of English through a meaning-based orientation has been abandoned. Distinctive patterns of form provide the sole criterion by which the units of the language system are classified. Reliance on form makes it possible for language study to become scientific. Like other sciences, therefore, linguistics is constantly involved in the process of corroborating or revising its generalizations. This very involvement makes linguistics a far more lively and exciting discipline than the traditional grammar. Fries, Sledd, and Francis, for example, have produced descriptive grammars that do not agree with one another in all particulars, though a careful attention to the formal patterns of English motivated each linguist. Refinements of previous observations often result, however, because the tools and equipment of present investigators are of improved quality and reliability. Simplification in one field, such as phonetic transcription, obviates time-consuming decisions over minor subtleties of recording

speech for all subsequent linguists. The evolution of linguistics is thus cumulative.

The treatment of parts of speech developed by linguistic science occurs at a most opportune time for the English curricula of the secondary schools. A knowledge of the traditional parts-of-speech categories has not perceptibly improved the pupil's ability to speak or write. The place of traditional grammar in the English program has become such a worrisome problem for educators in fact that it is one of the basic issues defined and clarified in one notable study by various professional groups interested in the study of English on all school levels:

What kind of knowledge should the student have about the structure of the English language, and how can such knowledge, at various levels, be used to improve his ability to write well? A knowledge of traditional English grammar is sometimes considered an intellectual discipline and a social necessity. Accordingly, over the past century, grammar has been taught in thousands of classrooms, but with little apparent effect upon the written or spoken language of many pupils. Perhaps it was naive to expect it, in terms of what we know today about the language learning process; but in any event, new approaches to this problem may be worth considering.

The descriptive linguists offer one such possibility. In place of the schoolbook grammar of past generations, quite adequate for describing Latin and Greek but not so adaptable to an analysis of English, they provide a descriptive technique which attempts to achieve scientific rigor and precision by concentrating upon the contrastive patterns of form and arrangement characteristic of the structure of the language. This is in contrast to the preoccupation with meaning typical of the early grammarians. Only after the patterns of the language have been adequately described does the linguist seek to attach meaning to them.33

It would seem, then, that the best thinking of professional language specialists favors the adoption of the descriptive linguist's technique of studying the English language. The traditional system of classifying parts of speech, defined inconsistently on the basis of what they "mean" and sometimes on what they "do," has been discredited by linguistics. It seems unlikely that even the effective teaching of an inaccurate description can lead to marked improvement in the speaking and writing of pupils. Preoccupation with form, instead of with meaning, ought to characterize the study of English structure in the schools.
CHAPTER III
THE USE OF STRUCTURAL LINGUISTICS
IN THE TEACHING OF WRITTEN COMPOSITION

The problem of teaching written composition is inescapably intertwined with that of teaching straight thinking. Every composition is an organized reflection of an idea, good compositions resulting from clear ideas aptly phrased. How to stimulate pupils to have clear ideas and be able to express them effectively through the written word has been a challenge to the English teacher for many years. Numerous methods have been developed by educators to assist him in meeting this challenge.

One method, advanced by Seely, expresses the conviction that composition ought not be taught in isolation from literature: "Both literature and composition should be present in our English activities each semester. As we have said before, they are two aspects of the same thing -- one the process and the other the product."1 The relation of composition to literature is too often lost sight of and ignored in the secondary school. Yet each attempt at creative or informative writing, it is felt, will almost certainly produce a new insight into and appreciation of literature. Conversely, the study of literature can help develop a maturer style of writing. A knowledge of the process should prove profitable,

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1Howard F. Seely, On Teaching English, p. 266.
then, whether the purpose of that knowledge is to further the enjoyment of the product or the cultivation of a writing style.

Other methods of approaching this problem of teaching written composition show radical variations. Hughes Mearns advocates, for example, a completely free writing laboratory. Virtually without teacher direction, the pupils give expression to the vast resources of creative impulse that lie, too often untapped, within them. The teacher's role in this situation is the important one of guiding the revelation of their highly fertile but latent native powers. "In five years," Mearns states, "I have not invited a pupil to write imaginatively on any theme suggested by me." Under this kind of tutelage, pupils learn not to ask for topics to write about, for none can be given.

Quite at variance with the Mearns approach, in fact, in direct contradiction to it, are the teaching methods suggested by Cross and Carney. With Mearns, pupils are characteristically busy at work, producing their seemingly inspired writings. With Cross and Carney, on the other hand, it is the teacher and not the pupils who displays such industry. Whereas Mearns merely guides, Cross and Carney must demonstrate: "A boy or a girl who learns to write well, or even passably, must write a good deal, must be shown how." Apparently

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2 Hughes Mearns, Creative Youth, p. 35.

3 Cross and Carney, Teaching English in the High School, p. 255.
the creative impulse of the adolescent author cannot always be unleashed by the Mearns relaxation of direction. The experience of these authors is indeed that pupils "have to be guided not only in what to write about, but the mood to use, and also what they say."^4

Once the product of the imaginative or creative impulse has taken the form of a written composition, however, there is some basic agreement as to what criteria are to be used in judging its quality. "Despite the experimentation now going on in writing," Hook points out, "the majority of professional and other skilled writers still adhere to the three old rhetorical principles that a piece of writing should be primarily about one thing, should be arranged according to some kind of pattern, and should stress that which is most important."^5 There might be different ways to approach the teaching of written composition, but the written composition itself must still meet the traditional test of unity, coherence, and emphasis. The terms, as words, are unimportant; but the ideas they signify must be comprehended if the purpose of writing, communication, is to be achieved.

Necessarily involved in any approach to the teaching of written composition is the sticky problem of deciding upon the kind of grammar

^4Ibid., p. 272.

to use as a model of effective, or appropriate, writing. How can pupils best be shown to write coherent and emphatic sentences? What tools does the teacher of composition have to help pupils frame their sentences in acceptable designs? The National Council of Teachers of English phrases the task thus: "The practical problem which the teacher continually faces is how to present principles of grammar and elements of usage so that they may affect directly the speech and writing of each student." Even the clearest exposition of grammatical structure by the conscientious teacher is held to be fruitless if the pupil's writing and speech show no improvement. Quite often the high-school pupil can parrot verbal definitions, and even examples to illustrate those definitions, also memorized, without ever thinking of applying these principles to his own writing and speaking.

Serious difficulties arise whenever an attempt is made to determine what elements of grammar and usage should be taught because there are basic differences of opinion about the nature of grammar itself. The conservatives assume that there is an inflexible set of rules of grammar change; vocabulary, they feel, is the only facet of language that changes, by accretion at least. Within the teaching ranks, a unified approach to and philosophy of language teaching are lacking. The English curriculum varies even in schools of similar

environments. Colleges increasingly find that the high-school graduates sent to them cannot write prose decently, whereas the high schools tend to blame the elementary schools for failing to teach writing adequately.

As linguistic scientists continue to work out a description of American English grammar that depicts the language as it actually exists, the language arts program presented in the secondary school strives for the highest quality possible. The goal of the program in writing is effectiveness, that is, the improvement of the pupil's personal writing and speaking. Grammatical knowledge must be presented, in this context, not as an end in itself; but it must be useful as an improvement tool which every, or nearly every, pupil can adopt.

Though the grammatical elements considered essential for the teaching of composition have undergone a continual evolution in the long history of the American secondary school, a fairly typical list is that proposed by the Commission on the English Curriculum of the National Council of Teachers of English. In 1956, after several years of studying the English curriculum in the United States, the Commission stated: "In general, the needs for grammatical knowledge on the part of those capable of applying it to speech and writing will be related to six problems: sentence structure, modification and subordination, agreement, noun and pronoun, verbs, and adjectives and adverbs."  

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7Ibid., pp. 370-71.
The ability to use even simple sentences effectively is often an elusive objective for many high-school pupils. College freshmen unintentionally use fragments in their writing. It seems that confusion arises from a failure to grasp the importance of the predicate in a sentence. That no "ing" word alone can be the predicate of a sentence seems so patently simple a concept to get across to a class that fragments containing this very deficiency are received by the teacher in disbelief. Another transgression occurs in punctuating a dependent clause as a sentence: "When we left the park after the game." The solution to this problem in the traditional grammar lies in teaching the pupil to "sense the incompleteness of the action," to see that meaningful, clear communication is muddled by faulty punctuation and incomplete sentences. Effective use of language, however, does not result merely from the absence of error. Each subject, each predicate, each object must be appropriately selected and arranged in a varied but clear pattern.

Much of the pupil's ability to use variety in building sentences results from his use of modification and subordination. Here a knowledge of the function of prepositions and conjunctions serves to impress upon the pupil how ideas can be connected. For emphasis, too, these connectives can of course distinguish contrasting ideas, contrasting rather than connecting. The concept of subordination is a valuable one which, at the same time, creates some difficulty. For the traditional grammar has successfully enumerated a complete hierarchy of classes under this concept. Subordinate clauses can
be divided into noun, adjective, and adverb clauses. Further sub-
divisions are possible. There are noun clauses, for example, that
are used as subjects, objects, or predicate nominatives. Emphasis
upon the classification of grammatical forms, for the sake of mere
classification, is a present danger in the classroom. The func-
tional grammarian rightfully objects to futile exercises in classi-
fication. He presents such concepts strictly for their value in
effecting greater clarity and forcefulness in pupil writing. And
to express the intricate complexities of mature thinking, the valuable
tool of subordination is indispensable.

Agreement, in modern English, has historically evolved into a
fairly simple matter. The loss of grammatical gender in favor of
natural gender, coupled with the leveling of inflectional endings,
has materially lessened the possible number of choices from which
the writer must make a selection. Except for this/these and that/
those, for example, there is today no problem of agreement between
adjective and noun, a consideration that needed attention in the
days when adjectives were declined and had genders. Two basic prob-
lems of agreement that the pupil must deal with, however, are
agreement between subject and verb and between pronoun and ante-
cedent. General rules often are sufficient only for the able or
gifted pupil. The principle, "Plural subject requires plural
verb," offers no particular trouble to him. Compound subjects are
readily handled; nor do the exceptions present insurmountable prob-
lems. Collective nouns do offer difficulties inasmuch as authorities
themselves differ over certain usages. But the able pupil can by this means be introduced to the livelier side of his grammatical studies; usages are not dead facts but points over which opinions and interpretations may differ. So too with agreement between pronoun and antecedent. Singular antecedents, including such compounds as are formed with "body" and "one," require singular pronouns in usual formal writing. Colloquial usage, however, shrinks from using "his" to refer to "everyone." Perhaps it is ironic that the concept of grammatical agreement finds grammarians not in agreement with one another.

Inflections are still important of course in the personal pronouns and in the relative and interrogative pronoun "who." A locution like "Him and me are going" marks the user as illiterate. Treating this problem in class, the teacher may find that discussing the rule on grammatical terms does not necessarily result in better speech or composition. To say that the subject of a finite verb in writing is in the nominative case is grammatically sound. Pedagogically, it is probably better to list a number of sentences on the board illustrating the concept of pronoun subjects and then provoking responses from the pupil. With the average learner, this inductive approach often proves more effective than the deductive, which ordinarily succeeds with the more gifted.

With verbs, a major stumbling block for the pupil occurs in the formation of tenses. In the matter of conjugation, English is closely related to Germanic in that it has two methods of
inflection: ablaut, or internal vowel change, which results in the "strong" verbs; and the addition of the dental suffix, which results in the "weak" verbs. Because it is not a synthetic language, English forms its tense by adding other words as well as by changing the original verb itself. The pupil must be able to deal with the time element in his writing. "I am going tomorrow" is an effective method of indicating the future, while "will" and "shall" can be considered interchangeable for most pupils in high school. The importance of the principal parts of verbs is usually stressed here inasmuch as the tenses are said to be formed from them. Modern linguists working on a distinctively English grammar, however, tend to repudiate the Latin or Greek designations, which are evident in the traditional division of the English verb into six tenses.

Adjectives and adverbs comprise that last major group of grammatical elements to be taught in a writing program, according to the Commission on the English Curriculum. Undoubtedly the hardest concept involved with adjectives is the forming of the degrees of comparison. The growing use of "more" and "most" to supplant the ",-er" and ",-est" inflections may in fact be a result of the unsure writer's effort to obviate the need to decide between two locutions. The chief problem presented by adverbs seems to be the use of two negatives where a negative meaning is intended. Pupils seldom sense the negative quality of words like "hardly," "scarcely," or "barely." There is likewise some confusion in the use of the modifier in the position immediately following the direct object, as in "She plays the piano
good"; and in the position following the verb, as in "The car runs good." If these usages flourish, of course, future grammars must place "good" among such adjective-adverb forms as "hard," "fast," and "slow." The adverbial use of "real" persists in current usage, where it is often to be seen modifying an adjective. Problems with the use of a particular word, however, may well be resolved by the teacher who concentrates on expanding the pupil's vocabulary and alerting him to the practice of carefully selecting the exact word to convey his meaning.

The six general problem areas in grammar thus listed are not meant to be slavishly followed by all teachers of English composition in the secondary schools. The National Council of Teachers of English has always been aware of the unique position of the individual classroom teacher, who enjoys a close relationship with his pupils. No one is better able than he to determine what specific items of grammatical instruction are necessary for the boys and girls under his charge. Nevertheless, the Commission does cite the following factors to look for as positive evidence of growth in the speech and writing of pupils:

a. Use of grammatically complete sentences.

b. Increasing accuracy of agreement between verbs and their subjects and between pronouns and their antecedents.

c. Growing variety in sentence order by increased use of modifiers at the beginning of the sentence.
d. Gradual growth away from compound sentences using and, but, so for co-ordination to complex sentences using connectives such as when, where, as, since, who to indicate more exact relationships between the ideas expressed.

e. Effective use of other subordinating elements to build up the idea of the sentence.

f. For some, at least, growth in balance and emphasis in sentence structure by the employment of varying lengths of sentences and the skillful use of parallel structure.

The elements of grammar that educators consider necessary for an effective secondary-school program in writing may vary from one source to another. Approximately seventy items of a technical terminology are listed in the Report of the Joint Committee on Grammatical Terminology, reprinted 1918; whereas C. C. Thorpe in Preparation for College English, 1945, records thirty items.

Teachers of composition are sometimes exhorted to look for such positive factors of pupil growth as are pointed out above; at other times they are presented with lists of the most persistent errors in pupils' writing in order that they may focus their teaching on the removal of these errors. One study of this kind, cited by J. N. Hook, lists these errors:

Sentence fragment
Comma fault
Excessive coordination
Pronounced incoherence or lack of logic
Dangling modifiers

8Ibid., p. 381.
Faulty word order
Faulty parallelism
Lack of agreement in number of verbs
Incorrect tense
Shift in point of view of verb or pronoun
Wrong case
Faulty reference of pronouns
Adjective-adverb confusion

Successful teaching of composition may result from an emphasis on either approach: positive factors of effective writing by pupils or the negative ones of errors to be eliminated.

Method, however, is not of paramount importance in the teaching of written composition. Since the thoughtful utilization of language resources is involved in the composition program, the description of those resources must be of primary concern. No method of teaching written composition can overcome the use of an inaccurate or incomplete description of the language, though it is possible that the employment of a perfect description may fail to bring about effective writing styles.

Every listing of grammatical elements said to be instructionally necessary for composition programs in the secondary school must therefore be closely scrutinized. The question to raise with such lists is, "What grammatical treatment are these elements accorded by the propounder?" The conventional or traditional rules of grammar probably describe the Latin syntax more accurately than they do the English. A typical rule about pronoun agreement is the following: "All pronouns must agree with their antecedents in person, number,

10Hook, op. cit., p. 331.
gender.11 It is of course a fairly simple matter to find very good
writers disregarding number agreement, as these sentences cited in
Fries indicate:

"Every English man and woman has good reason to be
pride of the work done by their forefathers in prose
and poetry." (Stopford Brooke, Primer of English Litera-
ture, p. 5.)

"Our club has frequently caught him tripping, at
which times they never spare him." (Addison, Spectator,
No. 105.)

"Each House shall keep a journal of its proceed-
ings, and from time to time publish the same, excepting
such parts as may in their judgment require secrecy. . . ."
(Constitution of the United States, Article I, Section
5, No. 3.)12

According to the conventional rules of grammar, each of the preceding
constructions is faulty inasmuch as the singular pronouns or nouns
at the beginning of the sentences require singular pronouns, for
agreement in number, in the latter part of the sentences. These
sentences would be "corrected" by substituting "his," "it," and
"its" for "their," "they," and "their," respectively. Of course
such pseudo-corrections reveal a reliance on alien grammar, a system
in which inflections play the chief role in signalling meaning. In
modern English, however, word order has supplanted the inflections
of Old English in this function. In addition, where meaning and
form conflict, Fries points out that

The tendency of the English language of today is to give
the concord based on meaning the right of way. This

12 C. C. Fries, The Teaching of the English Language, p. 41.
tendency in Modern English applies equally well to the relation of pronouns with their antecedents. It is part of the attempt of language to follow thought more accurately even when the thought changes within the same sentence.13

The attitudes toward language evidenced by Fries and by the writer of Data-Guide's English Grammar are diametrically opposed to each other. Fries examines good writing to discover what grammatical characteristics it contains; the other attempts to impose grammatical rules, probably inherited from Latin, upon all English writing.

Whatever the reasons may be, the present attitudes of many interested people reflect dissatisfaction with the written composition program of the secondary school. In his survey of opinion about English teaching, Joseph Mersand summarizes the data relating to written compositions:

Of the 79 replies from college presidents, 24 criticized the written composition of recent (past 5-10 years) entrants. . . . This weakness was noted by almost all other groups of respondents. An examination of the number of recommendations to improve written composition will reveal how large a place this aspect of English occupies in the thinking of the respondents. Thus, of a total of 76 different items of suggestions made by college presidents for the N. C. T. E. to improve the teaching of English, the largest number of recommendations were for written composition (39). In other words almost one half of the respondents made recommendations that would, in their opinion, strengthen the writing program.14

13Ibid., p. 40

These pessimistic findings did not prevent Dr. Mersand from reviewing this century's progress in the teaching of written composition quite optimistically in a recent article, "What Has Happened to Written Composition?" He lists thirteen changes which have made writing a less distasteful task in this century than it had been in the last:

1. In composition it is peculiarly important to enlist the interest and pleasure of the pupil.

2. The first essential of real success in composition work is to make proficiency in it seem worthwhile to our students.

3. Classroom activities in composition should be founded upon and should grow out of the experiences of the pupils.

4. We must not make the mistake of assuming that training in composition is purely an individual matter. Most self-expression is for the purpose of social communication.

5. Formal grammar has limited value in the improvement of written composition.

6. Defective motivation has been one of the greatest causes of poor instruction in composition.

7. Whatever adds to the pupil's store of facts and ideas, enhances his power to think, and augments his linguistic resources, will minister to the art of expressing himself in written work.

8. All the teachers of a school should share equally this task of supervising the English writing.

9. A good textbook in composition and rhetoric may be used for reference and for occasional exercises but for little else.

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10. Composition correction has changed from a pursuit in red ink by a bleary-eyed teacher-detective to a constructive evaluation which is shared in by the student-writer and the class.

11. About fifty years ago, the extra-class outlets for students' writings began to be emphasized. Today there is hardly a high school of any considerable size which doesn't have a student newspaper, a literary magazine, or an annual.

12. It is a mistake, too, for the teacher to allow himself to be thought of as an unscientific and unlearned person who merely knows how to say things. He is instead an expert in adolescence.

13. Finally, we come to the recognition of the individual which is such a frequent rallying cry among our professional colleagues everywhere.¹⁵

These changes have all been for the better, Dr. Mers and claims. Some of these statements can be subscribed to by all educators. The old maxim, "Every teacher in English is a teacher of English," for example, embraces the sentiment expressed in the eighth change listed. Certain other of the changes describe conditions under which the teaching of composition can be facilitated. Though measuring the degree at which these conditions become significant could involve disagreement, no issue need be taken of their general importance. In the view of the structural linguist, however, three statements might be questioned: 5, 9, and 12.

The fifth change states that "formal grammar has limited value in the improvement of written composition." Actually, Dr. Mers and shows considerable restraint in avoiding the use of "no" for

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 232-36.
"limited." Basic Issue Number Thirteen, from the widely regarded 
"Basic Issues in the Teaching of English," evidently sounded the 
need for caution here: "What kind of knowledge should the student 
have about the structure of the English language, and how can such 
knowledge, at various levels, be used to improve his ability to write 
well?" The objection to Dr. Mersand's statement is fundamentally 
a semantic one that hinges on the meaning of the term "formal gram- 
mar." The formal grammar that is conventionally taught in the 
secondary schools of the United States, according to research find- 
ings, has doubtful qualifications as the tool for improving the speech 
and written composition of pupils. Since the adequacy of the conven- 
tional, formal grammar as a description of the English language is 
denied by the structural linguist, moreover, the research that deals 
with the ineffectiveness of a knowledge of that grammar is generally 
held to be irrelevant. The fact is simply that at the present 
time there is no formal research to indicate whether or not a connec- 
tion exists between the knowledge of a scientific, rigorously cons- 
sistent grammar of English and the ability to speak or write more 
effectively.

17 American Studies Association, College English Association, 
Modern Language Association, and National Council of Teachers of 
to College English, October 1959, p. 9.

18 Sumner Ives, "Linguistics in the Classroom," in H. P. Allen, 
For the ninth item on his list, Mersand cites with approval this judgment of Percival Chubb, made in 1902: "A good textbook in composition and rhetoric may be used for reference and for occasional exercises but for little else." The difficulty with this opinion goes beyond its obvious assumption that textbook-teaching is inherently wrong. "A good textbook in composition" may present a description of sentence patterns of English that might merit the sustained attention of a class of high-school pupils. What makes a textbook "good" is of course the crucial question here. No doubt Chubb in 1902 would not measure the value of a textbook by the same criteria that Mersand would use in 1961. And the "good" that either of them discovers in any textbook might be at considerable variance with the estimate of the structural linguist.

Regarding the twelfth item, Mersand makes the further elaboration that "the guidance function of the teacher of English composition has been recognized for over fifty years." It certainly seems logical to expect that the teacher who regularly receives the varied factual and imaginative writings of his pupils is in a position uniquely suited for counselling. To be expert in adolescence is a valuable asset for any teacher in the secondary school. The teacher of English, however, should also take very seriously his responsibility of furthering the language development of his pupils.


20 Ibid., p. 236.
When Mersand deplores the image of a teacher "who merely knows how to say things," he is actually slighting the most important function that a teacher of English possesses. Knowing how to say things is not the mark of an unlearned or unscientific person. On the contrary, it is probably the mark of the truly educated man. And it is likewise the ability that offers the greatest challenge to the English curriculum of the secondary school.

To a large extent, difficulties in writing clearly are a result of the fact that the written language does not have so many grammatical devices as the spoken language. Whereas the spoken language has the five signals of syntactic structure enumerated by Francis—word order, prosody, function words, inflections, and derivational contrast— the written language has only four. It lacks the signal of prosody, the over-all musical pattern of stress, pitch, and juncture. In addition, the written language has no counterpart for the various bodily gesturing that often accompanies speech. The greater resources of speech are instrumental in effecting clear communication. Conversely, the relatively limited number of written devices causes the unwary to fall prey to occasional ambiguities and confusion.

The difficulties resulting from a lack of awareness of the differences between the spoken and the written language have been aptly pinpointed and cleverly illustrated:

One of the most serious obstacles to good writing is tendency to compose confusing sentences, especially sentences that have double meanings (ambiguities).

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Most people know about such problems, but few people realize that they are problems in grammar — that bad sentences of this kind are caused by a misunderstanding of the modern English system of grammar. The following sentences are simple examples of this kind of grammatical confusion:

He gave her dog biscuits.
The visitors were drinking in the open air.
He loved racing horses.
Ask Mr. Smith who is sitting by the window.
Clara Schumann was too busy to compose herself.

Unless they are being intentionally humorous, people write sentences like these because they are not aware that they have allowed another meaning, beyond the one they intended, to intrude.22

Each one of these sentences becomes clear upon oral reading, for the elements of prosody accurately indicate the functions of the key words. The writer needs to learn to manipulate the written devices of language in order to supplant the missing spoken ones. A description of the patterns of English that would ignore the important features of stress, pitch, and juncture cannot serve as an adequate model of English to study. A highly inflected language like Latin of course makes little use of prosodic patterns on clarifying the spoken language. In Latin, for example, a sentence like "He gave her dog biscuits" would be clear to the reader because the distinctive endings of the words totally identify their function in the sentence. To phrase the same thought accurately in English, the

22Dona W. Brown, Wallace C. Brown, and Dudley Bailey, Form in Modern English, p. 11.
writer needs to add grammatical devices that identify the presently ambiguous functions of key words. Depending on the meaning intended, solutions might be "He gave her dog some biscuits" or "He gave her some dog biscuits."

The composition teacher must have a thorough mastery of his basic material, the English language. It is to this fundamental component of the composition teacher's equipment that linguistics makes its contribution:

The major tool which linguists can give to the teachers of composition is a true and adequate description of the forms and constructions which are used in English for the expression of grammatical meaning, in short, an English grammar. Such a grammar will retain some of the categories and their terms which are in traditional grammar, but its methods of classification and definition will be fundamentally different.  

English grammar ought to be a serious study in the secondary school; certainly linguists are expending the effort on it that an important field of knowledge deserves. Their aim is to develop a descriptive account of English that would make it possible to discuss language matters with scientific precision. If they succeed in this attempt, every responsible teacher of composition on the secondary-school level will be obliged to bring himself up to date in the new content. The basic material of the English language, like that of modern physics or medicine, is undergoing eventful changes.

It is possible to group the innovations of linguistic study under two headings, for there are two separate models of English

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23Ives, op. cit., p. 303.
grammar developed by linguists. By far the more popular model is the "immediate-constituent" analysis, which has evolved from the works of Bloomfield, Fries, Roberts, Sledd, and Francis. Another name for this development is "phrase-structure" description. The other model of English grammar, which seems to be favored by linguists interested in machine translations, is "transformational" grammar. Its leading proponents are Noam Chomsky and Robert B. Lees. An overview of immediate-constituent analysis will illustrate its potential usefulness to the teacher of composition, who ought also to be aware of the dissenting opinion voiced by the transformational grammarians.

A heuristic observation made by linguists in immediate-constituent analysis was that, though there are many layers of syntactic structures, a relatively limited number of different syntactic units suffice to convey the apparently limitless meanings of English. Not only are these structures few in number, but they are usually binary; that is, they are composed of two constituent parts (each of which may be further composed of two constituent parts, and so on). The four basic types of structures, which account for all the possible constructions in English, are (1) structures of modification, (2) structures of predication, (3) structures of complementation, and (4) structures of coordination.\footnote{Francis, op. cit., p. 292.}
Structures of Modification

It was Bloomfield who first classified syntactic constructions into two types: endocentric and exocentric. The first is the type that belongs to some other constituent part of the construction; the latter is independent of any immediate constituent:

If all the syntactic constructions which go to make up a phrase are endocentric, then the phrase will contain among its ultimate constituents some word (or several words, members of a co-ordination) whose form-class is the same as that of the phrase. This word is the center of the phrase. In the phrase all this fresh milk, the word milk is the center, and in the phrase all this fresh bread and sweet butter, the words bread and butter are the centers. Since most of the constructions in any language are endocentric, most phrases have a center: the form-class of a phrase is usually the same as that of some word that is contained in the phrase. The exceptions are phrases of exocentric construction.

Linguists today more commonly speak of "headed" and "non-headed" constructions in place of the less wieldy "endocentric" and "exocentric" labels of Bloomfield. The application is the same, however. In the cited excerpt, for example, the phrase "all this fresh milk" is a headed word group. The head is "milk," and "all this fresh" is a modifier. Since the construction is a headed word group, the head itself is of the same form-class as the entire group. "Milk" can be substituted for "all this fresh milk" wherever the word group "all this fresh milk" can be used. The structural meaning will not be significantly affected thereby:

All this fresh milk is needed.

Milk is needed.

The children like all this fresh milk.
The children like milk.
They are grateful for all this fresh milk.
They are grateful for milk.

Non-headed word groups behave differently. In the word groups "Birds fly" or "in the trees," there is no head that can itself substitute for the entire word group. Neither "birds" nor "fly" can convey by itself the structural meaning of "birds fly":

- We know that **birds** fly south in the winter.
- We know that **birds** south in the winter.
- We know that **fly** south in the winter.

Subject-predicate word groups like "Birds fly" and prepositional word groups like "in the trees" are non-headed constructions; they have no center or head which can replace the entire group.

Only headed groups comprise structures of modification. In the above examples, nouns like "milk," "bread," and "butter" served as the center or head. Nouns, however, are not the only words that can serve in this capacity. In addition to nouns, words that may be the head of groups include verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and some function words. The remainder of the word group, apart from its head, is the modifier. The two elements of a structure of modification, then, are a head and a modifier. As the ensuing illustrations will

*In linguistics, the asterisk conventionally signals that the following is not an acceptable or a possible utterance.*
show, modern linguistics does not honor the traditional grammar's practice of limiting modifiers to adjectives and adverbs. On the contrary, all the four parts of speech usually recognized by linguistics can serve as modifiers. Nor does the linguistic method permit the mutually exclusive separation of words modified by adjectives and adverbs respectively. Instead, all four parts of speech and the function words can modify all four parts of speech and the function words.

An example of the various structures of modification should make these differences clear.

Noun as Head

1. As is to be expected, nouns frequently serve as heads of structures of modification. As in the example cited from Bloomfield, "all this fresh milk," moreover, the modifier of a noun is quite often an adjective. Usually, the adjective precedes the noun.

2. Nouns themselves often modify other nouns. As modifiers, nouns appear as possessives, noun-adjuncts, or appositives. Examples of possessives modifying other nouns would be

- professor's publication
- college's enrollment
- taxpayer's suit
- ocean's depth.

The noun-adjunct construction is evident in

- Oedipus complex
- frequency distribution
Traditional grammar, which defines adjectives as words that modify nouns or pronouns, would consider "frequency," "college," and "ocean" adjectives in the above examples. It would analyze "Oedipus complex" either as a compound noun, or as, with the others, an adjective ("Oedipus") modifying a noun "complex"). Modern linguists hold that such classifications of the traditional grammar may properly apply to languages other than English. In English structures, however, the powerful device of word order seems to demand that any part of speech be capable of modifying any part of speech.

A final regular occasion where nouns modify other nouns is in the appositive construction. Whereas possessives and noun-adjuncts always precede the nouns they modify, the appositives usually follow them:

- the professor, an authority in his field, . . . .
- Tom Jones, an orphan, . .
- the units, both reserves and guardsmen, . .

The appositive itself may be a construction more complex than the noun that heads it. The appositive, "an authority in his field," is itself a structure of modification in which "authority" is the head and "in his field" is a prepositional word group that modifies it.

3. Verbs frequently modify nouns in modern English. The usual forms that verbs take in this modifying function are three: the
present participle inflection, the past participle inflection, and the infinitive construction marked by to.

The present participle is a common modifier of nouns:

- refugees *fleeing* oppression
- fighting patriots
- damaging concessions

Though the traditional treatment of grammar speaks of the adjectival function of participles, linguists feel that since these participial constructions are in fact verbs, there is nothing unseemly in recognizing that verbs modify nouns. The same reasoning applies of course to the past participle and infinitive constructions. Past participles modifying nouns appear in phrases like these:

- defeated troops
- the city *besieged* for months
- a man *obsessed* with power

Participles may come before or after the nouns they modify; infinitives always follow the nouns they modify:

- a city to visit
- objectives to realize
- worlds to conquer

Verbs in the infinitive form without to seldom modify nouns, and those in any other forms not already illustrated never do.

As modifiers of nouns, adverbs seldom constitute "more than 2 per cent of the single-word modifiers of nouns in ordinary
Examples of adverbs as single-word modifiers of nouns are listed by Francis:

- the people here
- the temperature outside
- heavens above
- Europe now
- the conversation afterwards
- his speaking rapidly
- our acting together

When used as single-word modifiers of nouns, adverbs immediately follow them.

5. **Prepositional phrases** can regularly modify nouns. Such phrases are of course made up of a preposition and its object, usually a noun. The entire phrase can be attached to a noun:

- the man from Texas
- the house across the street
- styles of fashion

6. **Included clauses** are the final modifiers of nouns to be taken up here. Other terms for "included clauses" would be the "included sentences" used by Fries and the "subordinate" or

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26 Francis, *op. cit.*, p. 304.


"dependent clauses" of the traditional grammar. Examples of this construction, whatever label is given to it, are the following:

a leader whom no one trusted

the time when action was imperative

a country where turmoil was normal

Noun-headed word groups thus contain various kinds of modifiers. The adjective, noun, verb, and adverb appear as single-word modifiers of nouns; prepositional phrases and included clauses are the other structures capable of performing a modification function in modern English.

**Verb as Head**

When a verb forms the head of a structure of modification, the modifier may be an adverb, noun, adjective, another verb, a prepositional phrase, or an included clause.

1. The most common modifier of the verb is the adverb. Adverbs may precede the verb, follow it, or occupy the position between an auxiliary and the verb:

   he resolutely affirmed

   the committee strove manfully

   it has never been determined

2. Nouns also occur as modifiers of verbs. In the textbooks typically used in secondary schools, this fact is recognized but it is treated differently:

   Adverbial objectives (called also adverbial nouns) are nouns used as adverbs. Usually they indicate amount, weight, time, distance, direction, or value.
We walked a mile.
He waited two days.
It weighs a ton.
This model costs five dollars.
I hurried home.29

Since the conventional grammar by definition restricts the modifying function to adjectives and adverbs, it becomes logically necessary to speak of "nouns used as adverb" rather than of nouns modifying verbs, adjectives, or adverbs. Having repudiated this restriction in its description of English, modern linguistics is freed from making similarly circuitous explanations of the structures of the language. More directly, it is able to state that nouns modify verbs in sentences like those cited from the textbook above.

Furthermore, as in the fourth example, the modifying noun ("dollars") may itself be the head of another structure of modification ("five dollars").

3. In a few stereotyped expressions, adjectives actually appear as modifiers of verbs. Francis gives this restricted list as examples:

the children ran wild
the criminal came clean ("confessed")
the machine ran true
the dog went crazy
the show fell flat30

30 Francis, op. cit., p. 318.
The verbs in these expressions are neither linking nor transitive, but intransitive.

4. Various kinds of verbs serve to modify verbs in English. The auxiliary is one type of verb-modifier. Roberts points out this analogy: "As nouns may be modified by determiners, so verbs may be modified by auxiliaries. The determiner signals that a verb is coming." Words like "is," "may," "has," "can," "kept," "will," "would," and "shall," among others, point out the tense and mood of the verbs they modify:

   he is eating
   he may eat
   he has eaten
   he kept eating

Another modifying verb is the present participle form. In the traditional grammar, this -ing form is often called a gerund. Since there is no difference in form between a gerund and the present participle, however, linguists do not make this distinction. What traditional grammarians would again term adverbial objectives, in which gerunds are used as nouns functioning as adverbs, appear as verbs modifying other verbs in these expressions:

   the girls promenaded giggling uncontrollably
   he could only sing standing

---

A final type of verb-modifying verb is the infinitive:

he walks to economize

a committee remained to consider the bill

he shouted to be heard

With the present participle form and with the infinitive it is possible to compose more complex structures within the structures of modification. "Giggling uncontrollably" and "to consider the bill" are examples of more complex structures, the former being a structure of modification itself and the latter a structure of complementation.

5. A fairly frequent modifier of verbs is the prepositional phrase, perhaps the verb's most common modifier, after the adverb. The usual position for the prepositional phrase is after the verb it modifies:

the sun gleamed on the white curls

they hurried into the restaurant for their dinners

he traveled to Rome by plane

Once more the modifying structure may itself be a complex structure. The phrase, "on the white curls," for example, is a structure of modification with the head "curls" and the modifiers "the" and "white."

6. The included clause is the final major modifier of verbs in English. It is usually a complex structure containing many modifiers within it:

he plays whenever his indulgent parents are in the house
he quickly left after he had heard the news.

she danced as if her starring role were in jeopardy.

Like noun-headed word groups, the verb-headed groups contain a variety of modifiers: adverbs, nouns, verbs, adjectives, prepositional phrases, and included clauses. And these modifiers themselves may also serve as heads of more complicated structures within larger structures. A later section on diagramming syntactic structures will undertake to reveal more explicitly this characteristic feature of English: the layers of structures that typical utterances contain.

Adjective as Head

1. The same function words, namely the "qualifiers," which helped to identify the adjective as a part of speech frequently appear as the modifiers of adjectives in structures on modification. A list of these words appears on page 60 above, but the following examples suffice to show their modifying function:

- rather entertaining
- pretty smooth
- mighty fast
- somewhat eccentric

2. Adverbs very often appear as modifiers of adjectives. The position of the adverb-modifier is before the adjective:

- the mother seemed desperately anxious
- the widely notorious criminal
- a justly critical review
In an example cited by Francis, "it is dark ahead," the adverb "ahead" is not to be interpreted as a modifier of "dark." It is instead accurate to say that "the adverb ahead modifies the whole structure of complementation is dark, not just the adjective dark."\(^{32}\) The rule that adverbs modifying adjectives precede them is therefore seen to be inflexible.

3. The expression in which nouns modify adjectives are restricted generally to cliches, as these examples from Roberts certify:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modifier</th>
<th>Headword</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Adj.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knee</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skin</td>
<td>deep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ice</td>
<td>cold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a yard</td>
<td>wide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>water</td>
<td>tight(^{33})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The last item treads the fine line between a structure of modification and a compound word, for it is usually hyphenated in writing. The compounding of words in English is a complicated process, consideration of which is best postponed to the section that treats of the wordstock. Here it may be best to consider "water-tight" a compound noun and not a structure of modification composed of the head "tight" and the modifier "water."

\(^{32}\)Francis, op. cit., p. 321.

\(^{33}\)Paul Roberts, Understanding English, p. 201.
4 and 5. **Verbs** and **adjectives** may each serve as modifiers of adjectives in a limited number of instances. The expressions are once more fairly stereotyped, as Francis points out in his lists.\(^3\) When verbs modify adjectives, the present participle form precedes the head while to infinitive form follows it:

- freezing cold  hard to get
- boiling hot    beautiful to see
- hopping mad   easy to know

As modifiers, adjectives precede adjective-heads:

- icy cold      dark blue
- deathly pale  cold sober
- tight shut    crazy drunk

In the traditional grammar taught in the secondary schools, all of the modifiers in the above items are considered to be **adverbial**. This interpretation is quite logical since, by definition, the only modifier an adjective can have is an **adverb**. Of the participles, infinitives, and adjectives appearing as modifiers of adjective headwords, however, only the infinitives are conceded an adverbial function by traditional grammarians. Participles and adjectives are, by definition again, incapable of modifying adjectives; they can only modify nouns or pronouns.

6. In addition to the function words and the parts of speech, **prepositional phrases** often modify adjectives. Prepositional

\(^3\)Francis, *op. cit.*, p. 322.
phrases ordinarily follow the adjective they modify:

smooth as silk
famous in all the land
precocious beyond belief

7. Included clauses are the other and final word group that modifies adjectives. These clauses follow, or surround, the adjectives they modify:

lovelier than she had seemed in earlier competition
so sure that he had resigned his position
so avidly militant that, as a result, the peace was in danger

The highly flexible uses of word order in modern English are thus demonstrated by structural linguists in the fact that adjectives, as well as nouns and verbs, may serve as the heads of a wide variety of modifiers. Though these three parts of speech are the most frequent heads of structures of modification, there are at least four other types of words that can serve in this capacity: adverbs, function words, prepositions, and noun-determiners.

Adverbs as Head

The following types of words and word groups can modify adverbs and thus form structures of modification:

Qualifiers: somewhat smoothly, quite rapidly
Adverbs: remarkably quietly, usually well
Nouns: a yard off, a morning away
Prepositional Phrases: as quickly as a bird, off for a week

Included Clauses: he works more rapidly than the quota demands
he weaves so skillfully that he is in great demand

Function Word as Head

Modifiers of function words include the following:

Qualifier: somewhat more, quite enough
Adverbs: exactly so, soon enough
Prepositional Phrases: enough for now, more for children

Preposition as Head

Qualifier: rather like that
Adverb: somewhere over the rainbow
Noun: an inch over the type

Noun-determiner as Head

Qualifier: very many ideas
Adverb: nearly every person
Prepositional Phrase: more like an undeclared war

The structures of modification in modern English are thus composed of various kinds of heads and of various kinds of modifiers, though the binary nature of the structure remains constant. Layers of structures become evident where either the head or the modifier is itself part of another structure. The concept of modification in structural linguistics differs fundamentally from that of the
traditional grammar. In the grammar that is typically treated in
the textbooks for secondary-school English programs, only adjectives
and adverbs are said to have a modifying function. Even prepositi-
tional phrases, participles, and infinitives, when used as modifiers,
are said to be used **adjectivally** or **adverbially** in these treatments.
To treat the actual structures of English so simply is to treat
them inadequately. For not only can other words and phrases be
used as modifiers in English, but all these modifiers can pattern
with virtually every type of word in the language. The concept of
modification has thus been greatly expanded in structural linguistics.
Moreover, some of the modifying relationships receive different
interpretations from those of the traditional grammar. Consider
the sentence:

> He often sends money through the mail.

The traditional grammarian would say that the adverb "often" modifies
the verb "sends." Not so the linguist. As he sees it, "often"
modifies the structure "sends money." To a linguist analyzing
English expressions without regard to Greek-Latin grammar, it seems
that the subject "he" does not "often send" so much as he "often
sends money." The importance of this distinction lies in the neces-
sity of presenting a description of the English language that truly
reveals its characteristic patterns and structures. A concomitant
pedagogical implication is that facility in commanding one's native
language can best be developed by exposure to the actual resources
of that language. Where these resources may be obscured by the
imposition of the categories of an alien grammar, pupils are prevented from understanding the system by which their native language conveys meaning.

**Structures of Predication**

The two immediate constituents of the structure of predication are a *subject* and a *predicate*. Since fewer forms can fill the functions of subject and predicate than those that can act as heads and modifiers in structures of modification, the structures of predication are much less profuse. The predicate, for example, can be filled only by a verb or a verb phrase, a fact which considerably reduces the number of possible combinations. Subjects, however, may be composed of any of the four parts of speech, prepositional phrases, or included clauses. As the discussion on structures of modification indicated, moreover, each part of speech may itself be part of a larger structure.

Nouns make up the most frequent subjects in structures of predication. When modifiers of the noun are also present, which is generally the case, the subject is a structure of modification:

birds fly

even the smallest birds known fly

The infinitive form and the present-participle form of *verbs* also appear as subjects. These facts are recognized by traditional grammarians as well; often, however, the present-participle form of the verb is labeled a *gerund* by them:

to exist was itself a feat
to exist on that income was a feat

winning was important

his winning then was important

The prepositional phrase "on that income" and the words "his" and "then" become modifiers in the structures of modification used as subjects in structures of predication.

Adjectives sometimes occur as subjects, though traditional grammarians will again resort to the circuitous interpretation that they "are used as nouns." That is, adjectives are really one part of speech, but they may fill the function of another part of speech. Adjectives used as subjects may have modifiers themselves:

the brave in battle win wars

the cautious survive

Structural linguists would simply point out that "brave" and "cautious" are adjectives which are the subject in their respective structures of predication.

Adverbs are the final part of speech, and they too can serve as subjects. Traditional grammarians must again label such usages as other parts of speech, namely nouns, a resort to which the recognition of the facts of language does not impel linguists:

somewhere in the East will be his next location

now is the hour

Thus all four major form classes, the parts of speech, may act as subjects of verbs. Two word groups may also be subjects: prepositional phrases and included clauses.
Examples of prepositional phrases:

beyond the fence is off limits

to the moon is a possible journey

Examples of included clauses:

how he got there was a mystery

that they knew him puzzled everybody

The concept of the included clause as a subject is a familiar one in the traditional grammar, but the prepositional phrase in this position would be inadmissible. For the prepositional phrase has but two functions in the traditional grammar: in its adjectival use it can modify nouns or pronouns; in its adverbial use it can modify verbs, adverbs, or adjectives.

The other immediate constituent of a structure of predication is the predicate, which always has as its core a verb or a verb-phrase. This core, like the subject, may have modifiers, once more resulting in a structure of modification. The verb may be part of a structure of complementation, that is, it may be followed by a direct object or subjective complement. Or the verb may be part of a structure of coordination, consisting of equivalent grammatical units. When a verb is in such a structure, the coordinate members of course are either verbs alone or word groups in which verbs are central.

Whatever the structures in which they appear, "English verbs exhibit formal distinctions which can be classed under seven
The previously mentioned syntactic signals of word order, prosody, function words, and inflections provide the formal means by which the distinctions are made. Though some of the terms used to designate the seven headings are similar to ones that appear in the traditional grammar, the classifications themselves may be composed of vastly dissimilar features.

Under person, to begin with a striking example of variation, the traditional grammarians speak of three divisions: the person speaking (first person), the person spoken to (second person), and the person spoken of (third person). Instead of three persons, the structural linguists recognize just two: the common and the third singular. Those verbs are in the third singular person which consist of the base form plus the -s inflection. All other verbs are in the common person. The exceptions to this general pattern are the modal auxiliaries, which have just one form, and the verb "be," which has more than two forms. Problems in agreement between subject and verb in English revolve around the distribution of the third-singular forms. Listing what he admits are imprecise generalizations, Francis correlates the use of the third-singular form of the English verb with seven types of subjects:

(1) A noun for which he, she, or it may be substituted.

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36 DeBoer, op. cit., p. 27.
(2) One of the pronouns he, she, or it.

(3) The function-nouns this or that.

(4) A structure of modification of which one of the above is head.

(5) Any other part of speech besides a noun or a structure of modification or complementation with such part of speech as head or verbal element.

(6) One of certain special structures of predication: the included clause and the infinitive clause.

(7) A structure of coordination in which the co-ordinator is or, nor, (n)either ... (n)or, or not (only) ... but (also) and in which the last co-ordinate element belongs to (1)-(6) above; also one of certain other special structures of coordination.37

Every other type of subject than those enumerated will ordinarily pattern with the common person.

Tense is another property of the verb that is treated quite differently in the traditional grammar and in modern linguistics. In the former, there are said to be six tenses: present, past, future, present perfect, past perfect, and future perfect. In the latter, two tenses are recognized: common tense and past tense. Sometimes the common tense is called the present tense and the past tense the preterit tense. Non-past is also used for common tense. The past tense is composed of the base form of the verb plus the inflectional ending -ed, the resulting form being what is known in the traditional grammar as the second principal part of the verb. The common tense is simply the base form and the third-singular

37Francis, op. cit., p. 331.
forms. A comparison of the conjugation of the simple tenses in the traditional fashion featured in a popular high-school English textbook with the linguistic classification illustrates the differences:

Here is the traditional conjugation:

**Present Tense**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I take</td>
<td>we take</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>you take</td>
<td>you take</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>he takes</td>
<td>they take</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Past Tense**

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>you took</td>
<td>you took</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>he took</td>
<td>they took</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Future Tense**

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I shall take</td>
<td>we shall take</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>you will take</td>
<td>you will take</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>he will take</td>
<td>they will take</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Present Perfect Tense**

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I have taken</td>
<td>we have taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>you have taken</td>
<td>you have taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>he has taken</td>
<td>they have taken</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Past Perfect Tense**

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I had taken</td>
<td>we had taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>you had taken</td>
<td>you had taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>he had taken</td>
<td>they had taken</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Future Perfect Tense**

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I shall have taken</td>
<td>we shall have taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>you will have taken</td>
<td>you will have taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>he will have taken</td>
<td>they will have taken</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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38 De Boer, op. cit., p. 356.
The linguistic classification of the same verb follows:

Common Tense (Present, Non-past)

- take
- takes

Past Tense (Preterit)

- took

The traditionally oriented reader may at first be startled at the apparent omission of the future tense in the linguistic classification. He need only be reminded, however, that this classification is made on the basis of form. The traditional conjugation itself shows that the same form of the verb is used in the present tense as in the future. The auxiliaries shall and will do not alter this fact; they are function words that point to following verbs.

There are three phases in English verbs: resultative, perfect, and simple. The resultative phase is formed with the auxiliary be and the past participle of certain intransitive verbs; the perfect phase, with various forms of the auxiliary have and the past participle; and the simple phase, when neither of the other two phases is signaled.

English verbs have three aspects: inchoative, durative, and simple. The inchoative aspect, which shows the inception of an action, is formed with the auxiliary get and the present participle: "We must get moving again," and "They finally get negotiating seriously after the government's suggestion." This use of get is overlooked in the traditional grammar. The durative aspect, formed
with the auxiliary be and the present participle, is known in the
traditional grammar as the progressive tense:

he is reading
he was reading
he may be reading

The simple aspect is the form of the verb not signaled by either of
the other two aspects.

The two types of modes in English verbs are (1) those formed
with the modal auxiliaries and the base form of the verb and (2)
those formed with other auxiliaries and the infinitive form (with
to) of the verb. Members of both groups are the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modal Auxiliaries</th>
<th>Other Auxiliaries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>can/could</td>
<td>have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>may/might</td>
<td>be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shall/should</td>
<td>be going</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>will/would</td>
<td>be about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>must</td>
<td>used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dare/dared</td>
<td>ought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>need</td>
<td>get</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do/does/did</td>
<td>have got</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The so-called modal auxiliaries present no problem of acceptability
by traditional grammarians; some of the other auxiliaries, however,
would be challenged by them. Rhetoricians too would scarcely approve
of be going, be about, and have got; colloquially, of course, there
would be no objections.

39Francis, op. cit., p. 334.
Both structural grammar and traditional grammar recognize two voices in English verbs: active and passive. Linguists describe two ways in which the passive may be formed, whereas others treat just one method. The passive form that both agree on is the one formed with the auxiliary be and the past participle:

he is taken
he was taken
he will be taken

A second method of forming the passive voice is with the auxiliary get and the past participle:

he gets taken
he got taken
he will get taken

The active voice is not marked by either auxiliary with the past participle.

The last heading under which the formal distinctions of the verb are classed is that of status. The affirmative, the interrogative, the negative, and the negative-interrogative comprise the four types of status into which English verbs fall.\(^4^0\) The concept of status is entirely omitted in the traditional treatment of grammar. The interrogative status, evidenced in an utterance like "Are you going to school?" inverts subject and auxiliary. In the negative status, as in "He is not attending school," not immediately follows the first auxiliary. The negative-interrogative status, "Doesn't he attend school?" combines the inversion of the interrogative

\(^4^0\) Ibid., p. 337.
and the inclusion of the not of the negative status. The affirmative status, finally, is the one not marked in any of the three preceding methods.

A treatment of the English verb that takes into account the various features briefly outlined above begins to reveal the true complexity and resources of the language. One structural linguist points out that concentration on the formal features of the verb would show that:

...a large, varied, and complicated series of verb-phrases is possible. This is one of the most striking aspects of present-day English grammar. Much of this complexity has developed since Old English times (that is, since A.D. 1150), so that the development can be traced in written records. When historical linguists have thoroughly studied this phase of the history of English, it should provide just as spectacular an illustration of the adaptation of the language to new demands as does the tremendous growth of the vocabulary over the same period.41

Though the English verb, in its seemingly endless adaptability into series of phrases, is indeed a striking aspect of modern English grammar, it is an aspect on which the present secondary-school English program does not focus. The narrow perspective with which this conventional treatment views the English verb has the inden- sensitive effect of obscuring the great resources of the language for American pupils. A failure to show what is possible in the structure of one's native language restricts the number of actual

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41Ibid., p. 339.
structures that one is likely to use. In this respect, the school program in English is confining when it should be liberating.

**Structures of Complementation**

The two constituents of a structure of complementation are a verbal element and a complement. In addition to the verb or verb-phrase that satisfies the verbal requirement of the structure of predication, the verbal element in the structure of complementation may be an infinitive, a present participle form, or another structure whose components include any of these. The complements that may pattern with the verbal element in these structures are dependent upon the type of verb used: linking, intransitive, or transitive.

Since the linking verb joins its subject to a following word or word-group, it always has a complement. The linking (or copulative) verb receives similar treatment in school textbooks:

"Linking verbs are so called because they join predicate nominatives or predicate adjectives to the subject."

Indeed the entire division of verbs into linking, intransitive, and transitive is a commonly followed practice of the traditional grammar. Probably the most frequently used linking verb is be, though generally any verb that can be substituted for it without significantly changing the

---

meaning of the utterance is likewise a linking verb:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{was} & \\
\text{seemed} & \\
\text{Caesar} & \text{ sounded ambitious} \\
\text{became} & \\
\text{grew} &
\end{align*}
\]

In this particular frame, the verbs are all linking verbs. In other frames, these same verbs are not linking:

- She was in the balcony.
- He seemed to regret his decision.
- The child sounded the bell.
- Her blue gown especially became her.
- Canada grew too much wheat.

The verbs in the preceding expressions do not serve to link their subjects with complements; the verbs are either intransitive or transitive.

Intransitive verbs have, by definition, no complements. The sentence, "She was in the balcony," makes use of the intransitive verb was, which is modified by the prepositional phrase "in the balcony." Intransitive verbs cannot therefore form structures of complementation, since they have no complements. Some further examples of the intransitive verb would clarify this point:

- The wind blew savagely down the barren slopes.
- The storm suddenly abated.
- Masses of people cannot read.

Neither the linking verb nor the intransitive verb has a passive voice.
Transitive verbs have both complements and the forms known as the passive voice. When a transitive verb is changed from active voice to passive, the complement of the active voice becomes the subject of the passive.

Brutus slew Caesar. --- Caesar was slain by Brutus.

Money attracts talent. --- Talent is attracted by money.

The subject of a transitive active verb appears in a by prepositional phrase in the passive transform. Many verbs that appear in frames as transitive verbs may also be used as intransitive verbs. The following verbs are used transitively:

Turn the pages more rapidly.

Guides hurried the crowds along.

A jarring tackle stopped the runner.

He sounded a warning for passers-by.

These same words may appear as intransitive verbs in other contexts:

Turn to your left at the next intersection.

The crowds hurried to satisfy the guides.

The runner stopped before he had crossed the line.

A bell sounded gently near the lighthouse.

A good procedure to follow in distinguishing the various types of verbs is a formal one. If the verb has a complement, and if the verb can be transformed into the passive voice, then the verb is transitive. If the verb has a complement, but no passive transform is possible, then the verb is linking. If the verb has neither a complement nor a passive, it is intransitive.
Since only the linking and the transitive verbs have complements, the intransitive verbs are never constituents of structures of complementation. There are two types of complements that do appear in these structures: **subjective complements** with linking verbs and **objects** with transitive verbs.

**Subjective Complements**

All four parts of speech, prepositional phrases, included clauses, and structures composed of combinations of these elements can serve as subjective complements following linking verbs. The noun and the adjective in this function are most common:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Adjective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The president is a golfer</td>
<td>Leaders are powerful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His sons are students</td>
<td>They are industrious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He was the aggressor</td>
<td>He was aggressive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The adverb may also occur in this position:

The hour is now.

Three forms of the verb are used as subjective complements: the present participle form, the past participle form, and the infinitive. The present participle form is usually treated as a gerund in school textbooks:

His favorite hobby is **swimming**.

The past participle also occurs as a subjective complement:

These beans are **baked**.

When the past participle is used as a subjective complement, it is often necessary to distinguish the resulting structure from an
identical-looking passive voice construction. The previous example of a past participle as a subjective complement may be restated to read "These are baked beans," or "Are these beans baked?" or "Are these baked beans?" In no case is "baked" a part of a verb-phrase; it is an independent past participle form patterning as a modifier of 'beans.' In the sentence, "These beans are baked by experts," however, "baked" is part of the verb-phrase "are baked," a passive voice construction. The formal method of distinguishing between these two constructions is to locate a "by" prepositional phrase in the utterance. If one is or can be there, the past participle is part of a passive verb-phrase; otherwise, the subjective complement is signaled.

The infinitive is the third form of the verb that may appear as a subjective complement:

His ambition is to succeed.

Her hope was to attain stardom.

In the second example, the infinitive "to attain" takes the complement "stardom," together forming a structure of complementation that is itself the complement of "was" thus forming another structure of complementation. This feature in modern English of layers of structures is an important one for users of the language, and it will be taken up in more detail in the section of diagramming.

The prepositional phrase can serve as a subjective complement:

The bus was behind schedule.

So can the included clause:

What he did was what he thought proper.
The new president will be whoever wins this election. Subjective complements can thus be composed of a variety of words and word-groups in English.

Objects

Transitive verbs may take objects of various kinds. Quite often, in fact, two different kinds of objects, or apparent objects, are present; the result is sometimes an ambiguous construction. The ambiguity is especially possible when two nouns appear in the object position. Consider the possible combinations of nouns in this position:

1. Noun-adjunct modifying direct object (noun-adjunct construction):
   
   He opened an automobile agency.

2. Direct object followed by appositive (appositive construction):
   
   He introduced his father, a doctor.

3. Indirect object and direct object (indirect-object construction):
   
   He wrote his brother a letter.
   He sent his brother money.

4. Direct object and object complement (object-complement construction):
   
   He considered his life a failure.

   The governor appointed my uncle coroner....
A fifth possibility is the adverbial object construction, as in

He gave a speech this morning.\(^{13}\)

Purely structural signals resolve some of these potentially ambiguous constructions. The position of the noun-determiner, for example, distinguishes the noun-adjunct from the appositive. In the former, the noun-determiner precedes, never separates, the two nouns:

- an automobile agency
- the book salesman
- a lady doctor

In the appositive construction, the noun-determiner usually comes between the two nouns:

- (He introduced his) father, a doctor.
- (He delegated a) student, his assistant.
- (He telephoned the) mortgagor, the banker.

Appositive constructions, moreover, are also marked by the prosodic feature of juncture, graphically represented by the comma in conventional punctuation. A more accurate system of notating pauses or junctures in language, phonemics, distinguishes between four different kinds of pause in English utterances. They are called plus juncture, single-bar juncture, double-bar juncture, and double-cross juncture after the symbols linguists use to represent these phonemes. Plus juncture, which merely separates phonemes from

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one another — showing the difference therefore between "a name" and "an aim," for example — does not loom important in the writing of clear structures. The other three types of juncture have implications for punctuation in the writing and understanding of meaning in speech, for they can directly affect what is being communicated. The single-bar juncture generally separates the primary stresses of a sentence by lengthening out the phonemes preceding such stresses. In the following sentence, each noun may receive a primary stress:

The voters on the farms decide the elections.

Single-bar junctures would appear after "voters" and after "farms." When the primary stress is accompanied by a rising pitch, the double-bar juncture is evidenced. Thus in the sentence

Lincoln who won the election left the city

there would be primary stresses on "Lincoln," "election," and "city." There would also be rises in pitch after "Lincoln" and after "election." This combination of primary stress and rising pitch is the mark of the double-bar juncture. The double-cross juncture, finally, occurs when a drop in pitch precedes the pause. Counting numbers in a series is a good illustration of both the double-bar juncture and the double-cross juncture. After the first three numbers of the following series, the double-bar juncture occurs; after the final number, the double-cross juncture is evidenced:

one two three four

The pitch rises after each of the first three, but falls after the last; each number receives primary stress.
Juncture, then, is a formal signal of English grammar that can be used to distinguish various structures. It is clearly a distinguishing device between the noun-adjunct and the appositive constructions. The statement,

He opened an automobile agency

has merely the plus junctures that keep the words in discrete groups of phonemes. The only primary stress in the sentence would occur on the word "agency." In a sentence containing an appositive, however, as in

He introduced his father, a doctor

there are two primary stresses, one on "father" and one on "doctor." The pause between these two stresses can be either a single-bar juncture, when the same pitch level is sustained; or a double-cross juncture, when the pitch level falls sharply after "father." The noun-adjunct and the appositive constructions can thus be distinguished by means of the position of noun-determiners in the two structures and the differing junctures they contain.

It is not structurally possible to distinguish the indirect-object construction from the object-complement in all cases, however. The formal signals of word order and prosody are identical for both constructions. There is, as a consequence, no structural difference between these two groups of sentences:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indirect-object</th>
<th>Object-complement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He wrote his <strong>brother</strong> a letter.</td>
<td>He considered his life a <strong>failure.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He sent her a <strong>gift.</strong></td>
<td>He thought her a <strong>beauty.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They hired <strong>him</strong> a secretary</td>
<td>They made him a <strong>secretary.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These sentences are in no way ambiguous even though each of them contains a double object. Evidently there are differences in the way these objects are related to each other. Concentrating on the indirect-object construction, Francis lists these identifying criteria:

(1) With active verbs it occurs only in company with a direct object, as part of a complex complement.

(2) In such complements, it always comes before the direct object.

(3) Its referent is different from that of the direct object.

(4) When verbal elements appearing with such complements are changed to the passive voice, either object may be made subject.

(5) An indirect object may be changed to a prepositional phrase without major change in the total meaning of the structure.\[^{14}\]

It would seem that the application of these five criteria convincingly distinguishes the indirect-object construction from the object-complement, but there are certain pitfalls in the guides themselves. The first criterion applies to the object-complement exactly as it does to the indirect-object. The second assumes what it purports to identify; only after the indirect-object construction is known to be in a sentence can one make use of the fact that it comes before the direct object. The third and fifth criteria must be used cautiously since their appeal is to meaning, not to form.

Taken all together, however, the five guides do offer a fairly thorough method of identifying the indirect-object, and the object-complement, construction.

Thus far, the complements of the transitive verb that have been considered have all been single-word nouns. There are many other possible words and combinations thereof that can serve as objects. A brief enumeration of the structures that can be used as direct objects, indirect objects, and objective complements will conclude the discussion of structures of complementation.

Appearing as direct objects, in addition to single nouns, are the following:

Pronoun: I asked them.

Infinitive: He loved to eat.

Present Participle: He enjoyed swimming.

Structure of modification: They built a gigantic skyscraper.

Structure of predication: He said he knew the answer.

Structure of complementation: He wants to study law.

Structure of coordination: They want extra pay and better conditions.

Unlike direct objects, which are composed of a great variety of words and word-groups, indirect objects are quite limited. In addition to the noun, the following structures appear as indirect objects:

Pronoun: He gave her a ring.

Structure of modification: He gave his best girl a ring.

Structure of coordination: He sent his relatives and friends invitations.
Objective complements, finally are composed of varied structures besides the noun:

Adjective: He thought her beautiful.
Adverb: They found him alone.
Past participle: They thought the work completed.
Prepositional phrase: They found him in despair.
Structure of modification: They appointed him the newest member.
Structure of coordination: They elected him president and commander-in-chief.

Structures of Coordination

The fourth and final structure of modern English syntax is the structure of coordination, two parallel syntactical units that work as one. Quite often word order or prosody makes clear the parallelizing effect of the syntactical units; at other times, anyone of a number of coordinating words join them. All the parts of speech, function words, and various structures made up of these components can be joined to form structures of coordination:

Nouns:

ladies and gentlemen
either Mary or her mother
money rather than kudos

Verbs:

(The committee) heard and approved the measure.
Whistling and yelling, (The children entered.)
(They did not wish) to accept or reject the resolution.
Adjectives:

sadder but wiser

both aggressive and sincere

cool and calm

Adverbs:

(She sang) sweetly and softly.

(They viewed the crisis) hopefully but reluctantly.

(He spoke) forcefully rather than apologetically.

Function words:

Three or four (couples remained.)

(It was stored) in and around the barn.

Who or what (made that noise?)

Included clauses:

(He knew) what he wanted and how he would get it.

(Caesar's supremely confident communique) — I came, I saw, I conquered — (is justly famous.)

Structures of modification:

The tired man and his energetic son (arrived.)

The highly successful coach together with his eager team (ate.)

Structures of predication:

The girls danced, the boys sang, and the parents observed.

Either the tourists stay indefinitely, or they leave immediately.
Structures of complementation:

They like it or they hate it.

He washed down the garage but painted the house.

In some structures of coordination, the word order and intonation are sufficient to indicate that the syntactical units are being joined. The example from Caesar, "I came, I saw, I conquered," contains three coordinate elements without any joining words. More commonly, one of a set of coordinating words will be used to join such elements:

- and, rather than, not (only)...but (also)
- but, as well as, either...or
- nor, together with, neither...nor
- not, along with, both...and
- or

Except when a series is being used, the components of a structure of coordination, like those of the other three structures, are normally two in number. No matter how complicated a sentence is wrought in English, therefore, it can usually be analyzed into two constituent parts, each of which can be analyzed into two further constituent parts until the individual words themselves are reached. This binary nature of English syntax is a discovery of the structural linguists, whose grammar of English consequently differs fundamentally from the traditional one.

The four basic syntactical structures, each containing two immediate constituents, make up to a large extent the subject matter

\[ ^{45} \text{Ibid., p. 355.} \]
of the teacher of composition. Insofar as the teacher of composition
deals with language as a patterned system, he will be dealing with
examples and combinations of the four structures. The system itself
has been worked out by millions of speakers and writers of English
over hundreds of years; every present-day user of English must
conform to the rules which operate in that system. Failure to do
so frustrates the communicative function of language. What does
conformity to the rules of English syntax involve? Paul Roberts
answers:

To grasp the real structure of the English sentence,
one must understand not only the words that occur but
the principles of their arrangement. An English sentence
does not consist simply of a string of words in free
relation to one another. It consists of groups of words
arranged in a series of levels, each word group being
made up of subgroups, until we get down to the single
word.\textsuperscript{46}

Grammarians have long made use of the device of diagramming to
show how the words in a sentence are related to one another. Class-
room activities involving the diagramming of sentences appear once
more to be gaining in popularity. In the index of a widely used
secondary textbook in English, as evidence, there are thirty-nine
different entries under the heading "Diagramming," with items
covered ranging from "adjective clause" to "verb and subject."\textsuperscript{47}

\textsuperscript{46}Paul Roberts, \textit{Understanding English}, p. 204.

\textsuperscript{47}DeBoer, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 363.
The same text gives instructions on the formation of the diagram:

THE STEPS IN DIAGRAMMING

Sentence: Bud Smith caught three large catfish.

1. Draw a horizontal line. This horizontal line is called the base line, because the basic sentence elements appear upon it.

2. Find the verb and place it on the right half of the line. Always find the verb first; it is the most essential sentence element.

3. To the left of the verb, draw a vertical line that cuts through the horizontal line. This line serves to separate the predicate verb and the subject, the two chief sentence elements.

4. Place the subject to the left of the vertical line. To find the subject, ask yourself, "Who or what caught?"

Bud Smith caught

Lines drawn to the base line at different angles indicate differences of grammatical units, though there is no uniformity among the traditional grammarians concerning the formation of these various lines. Regardless of the complexity to which minor grammatical units carry all attempts at complete diagramming of mature English sentences, the traditional diagram does present a logical view of the essential elements of a sentence. Traditional grammar does not consider word

48 Ibid., p. 30.
order an essential element of English syntax; in fact, word order is completely disregarded in diagramming. The two sentences that follow are diagrammed identically according to the traditional procedure:

Three horsemen rode into the town.
Into the town rode three horsemen.

The verb, which the high-school pupil is exhorted to find first, is identical in each sentence: "rode." "Rode" is hence to be placed on the extreme right of the horizontal base line. To the left of the vertical line separating the predicate verb and the subject, the subject, "horsemen," is placed. The adjective, "three," which modifies the subject is ordinarily placed under it. The prepositional phrase, "into the town," is likewise placed under the verb, which it modifies. The effect of the traditional diagram, then, is to cluster the subject with its modifiers to the left of the vertical line, and the predicate verb with its modifiers to the right of that line. Complements are usually placed on the extreme right of the base line, after a vertical line which does not cut through the horizontal base line but does separate predicate verb from complement. The lines generally used for depicting the sentence essentials of subject, predicate verb, and complement are thus the following:

\[
\begin{array}{c|c|c}
\text{(Subject)} & \text{(Verb)} & \text{(Complement)} \\
\end{array}
\]

Linguists object to the traditional diagram because it ignores word order, an important device of English grammar. Closer attention to the effects of word order in English, they feel, would
render impossible some of the concepts of modification developed in the traditional grammar. If it is to show the structure of English, a diagram must not alter the arrangement of words as they are actually used in sentences. Recognition of the importance of word order reveals the essentially binary structure of the English language; that is, English utterances are so constituted that they can be progressively reduced to two components until the individual words themselves are reached.

The importance of word order, then, is preserved in the way linguists tend to diagram sentences. An illustration will clarify this point. A shift in word order will not result in identical diagrams:

(1) Pupils occasionally give their teachers pause.

(2) Occasionally pupils give their teachers pause.

In sentence (1), the two immediate constituents are "pupils" and "occasionally give their teachers pause," subject and predicate respectively. In (2), the immediate constituents are "occasionally" and "pupils give their teachers pause," a sentence modifier and a sentence. The latter constituent is next divided into the subject "pupils" and the predicate "give their teachers pause." Diagramming according to the conventional grammar would result here in identical treatments for each sentence, even though the two sentences themselves are not identical. The diagrams of the linguists would resemble "Chinese boxes" that fit into one another: The many-layered organization of English syntax "is graphically indicated by enclosing
each ultimate constituent in a box and drawing larger and larger boxes around the immediate constituents of each of the increasingly complex structures into which they combine.\footnote{Francis, op. cit., p. 293.}

Sentence (1) of the above examples is diagrammed in this manner by linguists:

![Diagram of sentence structure]

Each box in the diagram is grammatically significant, and the original arrangement of words is not disturbed. Thus "pupils" and "occasionally give their teachers pause" are seen to be the same structural level, for they occupy equal-sized boxes. "Occasionally give" is enclosed in a box because the two words pattern together, forming a structure of modification in which the verb "give" is the head and the adverb "occasionally" the modifier. "Their teachers" is likewise a structure of modification, the noun "teachers" being the head and "their" the modifier. It is also the indirect object, and "pause" the direct object, of the verb-headed structure of modification "occasionally give." All the words after "pupils"
form one structure of complementation. The deeper the boxes are buried in the diagram, the more layers of structures does the sentence contain. The indirect object "their teachers" is a fourth-layer structure, as the diagram graphically demonstrates. A logical presentation of the elements of a sentence, for which the diagram of the conventional grammar is designed, fails to uncover the rich resources of English largely made possible by a flexible word order.

Sentence (2) differs from sentence (1) by a transposition of the initial two words. Since the word order is different, consequently, a diagram of the sentence must differ from that of every other sentence:

"Occasionally" is a sentence modifier that affects the entire structure that is enclosed in the adjoining box. The immediate constituents of the sentence are "pupils" and "give their teachers pause," a noun subject and a structure of complementation respectively. This structure in turn is comprised of the verbal element "give" and the complements "their teachers pause," "their teachers" being
a structure of modification used as an indirect object and "pause" being a direct object. "Their," of course, is a pronoun modifying the noun head "teachers." The ultimate constituents in sentence (2), the individual words themselves, can be seen to be five layers removed in the cases of "their" and "teachers." Once more, the syntax of an English sentence is graphically represented in its characteristic and rich use of layers of structure.

The concept of "occasionally" as a sentence modifier is a departure from the traditional grammar, which limits modifiers to adverbs and adjectives and things modified to five parts of speech: nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Other examples of sentence modifiers are the following expressions occurring before the symbol "/":

After the game / the manager was thrown into the shower.
Quite often / world tensions had mounted like this.
When the reports arrived / the treasurer became ill.
This morning / a new edition was published.

The procedure for arriving at the immediate constituents, or "cuts," in a given sentence is quite simple: "In a noun cluster, we cut off the modifiers after the headword first, then those before it. In a verb cluster, we cut off those before the headword first, then those after it."50 Here is a sentence illustrating the cuts to be made for a noun cluster:

The versatile pianist of the band who traveled by car / soloed.

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The versatile pianist of the band / who traveled by car

The versatile pianist / of the band

The / versatile pianist

versatile / pianist

With a verb cluster, the cuts are made in reverse order from those followed in a noun cluster:

The audience / invariably responded with generous applause.

invariably / responded warmly with generous applause

responded warmly / with generous applause

responded / warmly

As the cuts above show, "invariably" does not simply modify the verb "responded," as the conventional grammarian would hold. Rather, it modifies the remaining structure, "responded warmly with generous applause." "With generous applause" similarly modifies the verb-headed structure of modification, "responded warmly," and not merely the verb.

When the cuts cannot be made unequivocally, the sentence is an ambiguous one. An example is this sentence:

The children who came to school regularly gave their teachers pause.

The intention of the writer might have been either of these interpretations:

The children who came to school regularly /
gave their teachers pause.

The children who came to school /
regularly gave their teachers pause.
In the first instance, "regularly" is part of the subject; in the second, it becomes part of the predicate. Quite often the addition of another word serves to clarify the writer's intention. If the sentence had read:

The children who came to school infrequently regularly gave their teachers pause.

the cut would have to go after "infrequently." The meaning conveyed by "regularly" would necessarily be taken as part of the predicate.

Modifiers that follow nouns are particularly susceptible to ambiguity. Roberts lists the following constructions as ones whose alternate meaning might tease the reader:

the girl in the car that needed water
the girl in the car that needed repairs
the girl in the car that he was thinking of buying
the girl in the car that I got for Christmas
the girl in the car that I loved dearly
the girl in the car that reminded me of Mother

All of the "that" clauses above may pattern with either of the nouns "girl" or "car." A clear set of statements would result from the use of "who," which patterns with "girl" but not with "car"; and from the use of "which," a form that occurs with "car" but not with "girl." Writers must be exhorted to include as many structural signals of their syntactical meaning as the clarity of the communication warrants.

The taboo against the split infinitive in English is responsible for a number of ambiguities. Adverbs appearing before the "to" of an infinitive cannot always be assigned with certainty to their

\[51\text{Ibid., p. 218.}\]
intended structure of modification. The writer may have carefully worked out his thought, but then sacrificed precision for convention in the placing of that adverb. Even good writers, from whose works the following have been excerpted, are prone to such ambiguities:

Such writers as Hemingway, Dreiser... have not failed heartily to abet the leaders.

A young woman with a figure whose perfection her ill-fitted... clothes failed altogether to conceal.

Von Hern performed the introduction with a reluctance which he failed wholly to conceal.

I allow myself the honor seriously to doubt...

The reader is at least momentarily puzzled by each of the adverbs preceding the mark of the infinitive in the sentences. Did the writers in the first example heartily fail or heartily abet? Did the young woman’s clothes altogether fail or altogether conceal? Did Von Hern wholly fail or wholly conceal? And finally does the “I” seriously allow or seriously doubt? In each of the four sentences, the ambiguity would be entirely resolved if the adverb were placed immediately before the verb it modified. Position, or word order, again looms as a highly important grammatical device in English, though of course there are many other signals.

How can one best avoid writing ambiguous structures? A sensible answer is given by Roberts: "The only general advice that can be given is this: to be alive to the possibilities, and then, working

52 Quoted in Robert and Cassidy, The Development of Modern English, p. 302.
within the confines of idiomatic English structure, to see to it that one's sentences can yield one and only one meaning. Immediate-constituent analysis, which clearly shows how layers of structure enfold one another in English syntax, is a vital instrument in helping pupils develop their sensitivity to these possibilities. It is not, unfortunately, a panacea for awkward writing:

I should confess, nay insist, that linguistics simply gives the teacher additional or more effective tools and a better understanding of what he is working with. Any improvement he makes in his knowledge of language, any details he learns about the actual forms and constructions of English, will make him a more expert instructor. But at the present time, although linguists know and can teach information which is more accurate than the traditional notions, they still have to learn much about the details of English, and some of what they have learned is not ready for publication. Moreover, the field itself does not cover all the things that the composition teacher needs to know. There is still no royal road to good writing, no magic method that will turn out skilled writers, and neither linguistics nor any other field is likely to provide one.

Proponents of immediate-constituent analysis maintain only that their descriptions of English syntax, which are arrived at by a searching examination of actual English forms, provide an accurate base on which a composition program can be soundly built. The grammatical elements necessary for an effective program of writing on the secondary-school level, in short, would be those elements that are used in an immediate-constituent analysis.

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53 Paul Roberts, Understanding English, pp. 222-223.

54 Ives, op. cit., p. 307.
Though the position of immediate-constituent analysis is the dominant one in linguistics, not all linguists believe that the best grammar of English can be obtained by this procedure alone. Perhaps the leading spokesman for the minority group which espouses a "transformational" grammar is Noam Chomsky, the author of the influential Syntactic Structures. Immediate-constituent analysis, or phrase structure analysis, is held to be an inadequate theory of language by the transformational grammarians on the grounds that "any grammar that can be constructed in terms of this theory will be extremely complex, ad hoc, and 'unrevealing,' that certain very simple ways of describing grammatical sentences cannot be accommodated within the associated forms of grammar, and that certain fundamental formal properties of natural language cannot be utilized to simplify grammars." The treatment of auxiliary verbs in immediate-constituent analysis is complex, for example; in transformational grammar, it is considerably simplified.

Transformational grammarians do not seek to eliminate phrase-structure grammar, but rather to relegate it to a minor position in a grammar of English:

It appears to be the case that the notions of phrase structure are quite adequate for a small part of the language and that the rest of the language can be derived by repeated application of a rather simple set of transformations to the strings given by the phrase structure grammar. If we were to attempt to extend phrase structure grammar to cover the entire language

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55Noam Chomsky, Syntactic Structures, p. 34.
directly, we would lose the simplicity of the limited phrase structure grammar and of the transformational development. This approach would miss the main point of level construction..., namely, to rebuild the vast complexity of the actual language more elegantly and systematically by extracting the contribution to this complexity of several linguistic levels, each of which is simple in itself.56

Thus simplification of the rules governing English syntax is the avowed aim of the transformational grammarians. Their notion of what a grammar should be and do is somewhat the reverse of that of the practitioners of immediate-constituent analysis. Regarding the theory underlying much of the current linguistic literature, Robert B. Lees make these pointed comments:

The linguist has correctly accepted the two main tasks of linguistics research as 1) to give analyses of sentences, and 2) to give criteria for these analyses. However, he has traditionally and naively interpreted the two key notions of "analysis" and "criterion of analyses" in a very primitive way. By "analysis" he usually understands "dissection into simple additive segments," and by "criteria" he usually means "recipes for segmentation."...

Unwilling to accept such crude goals, we interpret these two same tasks in a way much more in accord with the methodology of other sciences. We take "analysis" in linguistics to mean the assignment of grammatical structures to sentences, no matter how abstractly these structures may have to be formulated and no matter how indirectly they may happen to be related to the physical record of the sentences. We understand "criteria of analysis" to refer to the constraints which we hope to be able to impose on an explanatory linguistic theory, the features which we expect a grammar to exhibit if it is to be considered adequate.57

56Ibid., pp. 41-42.

The difference between this approach and that of immediate-constituent analysis is extreme. The latter parses a given sentence into its constituent parts; the former attempts to formulate the rules that will generate English sentences.

As the transformational grammar of English continues to be worked out, it promises to become a more influential discipline than it is at present. The body of descriptive materials already available in the immediate-constituent analysis, on the other hand, is impressively large and rapidly expanding. Its accurate and detailed handling of actual English structures merits the attention of all teachers concerned with the teaching of writing in the secondary schools.
CHAPTER IV

USAGE AND THE DOCTRINE OF CORRECTNESS IN LANGUAGE

Many people are either unable or unwilling to learn the technical terms used to discuss language. Quite frequently, in fact, laymen do not even realize that certain words must be understood in specialized senses. They are content to accept such obviously specialized words as "metonymy," "synechdoche," "phoneme," and "morpheme" in the restricted meanings which the investigators of these concepts have evolved in the course of careful study of effective speech and writing. Words like these remain the dialect of the literati and therefore continues to be used with precision. When words of less limited application are employed, like "grammar" and "usage," however, the general public feels competent to use them, obscuring in the process the precise meanings that these equally technical terms have. For when a word is adopted into the public vocabulary, a multiplicity of meanings is often generated. The term "grammar" is certainly in this category and has indeed been subjected to such expansion. Professor Hook ventures this rather sweeping generalization about the term:

Perhaps the most misunderstood word in the English language is grammar. To students and to the general public it means any part of English that is not reading and literature. To English teachers it most often means analysis of sentences and classification of their parts. The public shouts each day, "Our schools should teach more grammar!" meaning more writing, more speaking, more spelling, more pronunciation, more really practical experiences in using the language. English teachers
hear the shouts, and interpret grammar in their own way -- to mean more drill on recognition and classification. With renewed determination they continue doing what has been scientifically proved to be of little value. They think that they are giving the public what the public wants, but in reality they are substituting stones for bread.¹

Thus the meaning of the terms grammar and usage become indistinguishable for many people, teachers of English not excepted. Roberts describes the popular reaction of the ordinary citizen to language usage: "We remark of someone who says 'I ain't got none' or 'I never seen him' that his grammar is poor or that he uses bad grammar. Someone who says, 'I laid down on the couch' is said to have made a grammatical error."² There are other senses in which the word grammar is used:

In the school -- in English classes -- the meaning is usually rather different. Here such language difficulties as those cited are likely to come under the head of "usage," and the word grammar is reserved for an analytical and terminological study of sentences. Thus the person studying grammar will learn the "parts of speech," their names and their definitions; he will learn such terms as phrase, clause, interrogative sentence, participle, retained object....

Among professional students of language -- linguists or linguistic scientists, as they are called -- the word grammar, if it is used at all, will mean something different still. It may mean something like "the total set of signals by which a given language expresses its meanings" or "the total structure of a language." It will thus include the sound structure as well as inflectional endings, if any, word order, distinctive patterns,

²Paul Roberts, Understanding English, p. 131.
and so on. In this sense, grammar is what you learn when you learn a language, and in this sense any native speaker of a language, however uneducated, knows the grammar of his language.\textsuperscript{3}

To the linguist, grammar concerns itself with the way words are organised into meaningful patterns. Consequently, "I ain't got none" can be analysed as a structure of predication containing a subject, I, and a predicate, ain't got none.\textsuperscript{4} The expression itself, so far as grammatical considerations are relevant for linguistics, is neither good or bad, correct, nor incorrect. It is simply a meaningful organization of words or it is not a meaningful one. From this point of view, "correctness" or "goodness" is not a judgment that can be applied to the grammar, or structure, of a language.

Although most grammars of English were written about the way educated or cultivated people use language, it is entirely possible to write a grammar showing how the uneducated and uncultivated speak and write. The writer of such a grammar needs to know how his subjects use their language in no less degree than the usual grammarian needs to know how the more refined use theirs. Thus grammars demand upon usage, which is the equivalent of linguistic behavior. In either case, scientific grammars are factual descriptions of how a group of people say things; they make no attempt to evaluate the various patterns of word organization with which they deal.

\textsuperscript{3}Ibid., p. 132.

But not all grammars are scientific. Porter Perrin lists and discusses the subject-matter of several different types of grammar in use today:

1. The basic structure of a language. Every language is a complex of patterns developed over a long period of time by the people using it....These patterns may be called the complete or total grammar of the language; in this sense English grammar is "the English way of saying things."

2. Descriptive grammar. This is an attempt to describe as systematically and objectively as possible the total system of a language. The method of the descriptive grammarian is scientific: he observes and describes the language as it is, without attempting to guide the language habits of speakers and writers....

3. Prescriptive grammar. Besides these types of scientific grammar we also speak of prescriptive or normative grammar. A prescriptive grammar is a body of rules presented as guides to expression, statements of how, in the belief of the writer, people should speak and write. Many English grammars of this type, represented principally by textbooks prepared for the use of students, are now in disrepute because they are out of touch with scientific grammar and with actual usage. Too many schools of grammars represent either older usage or traditional rules that are not consistently followed and some that have never been followed by users of English....

4. Grammar as remedy. Many people are occasionally oppressed by a feeling of inadequacy in their use of English. They believe that all their deficiencies, real or imagined, in vocabulary, effective expression, spelling, usage, and punctuation would be removed if they studied "grammar" conscientiously. This is back of the demand for "More grammar!" in the schools. The desire is really for more varied and more acceptable usage,...

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There is further confusion over the term "usage." When a language specialist points out that his grammar is based on usage, he employs the term "usage" to represent all of linguistic behavior. Every sentence written or spoken, in this sense, is an example of usage. When a teacher asks his class, "What does usage tell us about this construction?" however, he takes usage to mean those constructions accepted as appropriate by a set of cultivated speakers. It is this latter definition of usage that is applicable to the many controversial expressions vying for acceptance on the public battlefields of press, airwaves, and linguistic circles.

"Points of usage" is the usual linguistic mode of referring to such items.6

Since no high-school subject is more generally required than English, the question arises, Why is there such a proliferation of inexactness regarding the meaning of the essential elements of its subject matter? Is the teaching staff unable to present its program clearly enough for pupils to master the material? Are today's pupils perhaps too slow-witted to grasp these concepts? Or are the concepts and ideas themselves so formidable that they defy comprehension? There is considerable evidence to suggest that it is indeed the present organization of the subject matter of the English language program that must bear the responsibility of its difficulty.

6Francis, op. cit., p. 224.
As the Commission on the English Curriculum points out:

A ... difficulty arises from the fact that there is not, at present, one universally accepted system of describing English grammar. On the contrary, for more than a generation, linguistic scholars have been examining critically the shortcomings of the present system of analysis, which was organized in the eighteenth century by analogy with the grammar of Latin. . . . the teacher of English who is honestly trying to do the best possible teaching of grammar in the secondary schools cannot rely securely on the grammatical analysis which he was probably taught any more than the teacher of physics can rest content with teaching the physics he learned a decade ago.7

The very linguistic scholars who trace the present ills of the English program to the eighteenth century may have provided those ailing curriculums with the materials to remedy themselves. For in addition to documenting the charge that the eighteenth-century grammarians were the progenitors of numerous misconceptions about language that exist today, the linguists have been carefully developing consistent and scientific descriptions of the English language. This scholarly body of research, though hardly in wide use in the secondary schools, is nevertheless receiving growing attention.

Like Western Man who, everywhere he went in his mind, met Plato coming back, the student of the high-school English language program is always impressed by the prominent role played by the eighteenth-century grammarians in the formation and preservation of grammatical concepts. This influence is pervasive and profound. One handbook

and textbook, propounding the prescriptive eighteenth-century view of language, is modeled after another such handbook and textbook, which itself is similarly modeled, and so on, until that century is reached. High-school pupils exposed to this training for four or six years eventually become the teachers who must conduct other high-school pupils through the intricacies of language study. Many of these prospective teachers of English, moreover, are unable to elect a grammar course during their college programs. They become members of high-school English departments, usually conscientious members, but unfortunately their experiences in their own high-school English classes represent their last formal exposure to grammar. It becomes apparent that the handbooks and textbooks studied by such pupils during their formative years in the secondary schools determine to a large extent the kinds of attitudes developed toward the language and its study. It is all the more necessary, therefore, to examine carefully the manner, spirit, and qualifications of the eighteenth-century grammarians who exert such influence on the teaching of English grammar in the American secondary school in the twentieth century.

In an anonymous grammar entitled A New English Accidence (1736) occur these sentences:

It must be acknowledged that the Plan of the Latin Grammar is not the best which might be contrived, especially for our English Youth, but as Custom and Authority have made it the Standard Rules of teaching them that Language, there seems therefore a necessity of making the Rules of an Introduction to an English grammar, as
subservient thereunto as possible, (so far as the Nature and Genius of our own Tongue will admit) that whilst we are teaching the one, we may at the same time be laying a good Foundation for the other. And this I think the only reason for keeping as close as we can to the Method and Rules there laid down; for otherwise, I should be the last to find Fault with any Person for quitting the Old Track and setting out a better.8

A large number of people, including school teachers, however, still travel the Old Track, reflecting the views of the prescriptive grammarians of the eighteenth century. These men had more enthusiasm than learning or sophistication. They did not know, as Dr. Samuel Johnson eventually realized, that language tended to resist human control. Ignorance sometimes being bliss, they set about attempting to improve the language. Some of their proscriptions took hold; to this extent, therefore, the naive orthodoxy of these grammarians enabled them to overcome the resistance of language to conscious human direction. Only heretics recognized language as "a vastly complicated and often haphazard growth of habits stubbornly rooted, the product of great variation in social soil and climate, not more readily changed by fiat into clipped and formal garden pattern than is any vast area of swamp and jungle and timber-line vegetation."9 Nevertheless the English language was subjected to a grammatical reformation during the eighteenth century for the avowed

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purpose of "ascertainment." The force of this word then," Baugh points out, "was somewhat different from that which it has today. To *ascertain* was not so much to learn by inquiry as to settle a matter, to render it certain and free from doubt.*\(^{10}\) The reformers planned to regularize the chaotic language, to settle correct usages once and for all, and to establish permanently the proper meanings of words. The deed fell far short of the aim. The usage of the language could not be fixed until the users of the language were compelled to conformity, and no means of enforcement had been devised.

Unfortunately, this enthusiastic scrutinization was carried on without the benefit of linguistic sophistication. Generally unable or unwilling to take the users of language into account in attempting to codify the language, these grammarians concentrated on fixing usage. Though by 1712 the time seemed ripe to plan authoritatively for an Academy,\(^{11}\) interest in this movement soon diminished and Samuel Johnson sounded its formal death knell when he said of Swift's Proposal: "The certainty and stability which, contrary to all experience, he thinks attainable, he proposes to secure by instituting an academy; the decrees of which every man would have been willing and many would have been proud to disobey."\(^{12}\) This observation

\(^{10}\)Albert C. Baugh, *A History of the English Language*, p. 309.

\(^{11}\)Ibid., p. 320.

\(^{12}\)Ibid., p. 325.
gets at the root of eighteenth-century difficulty: reaching the users of language. And it adequately sums up the impossibility of achieving the goal of ascertainment.

But the orderly age wished to have an ordered language. Men like Bishop Wokin, Beattie, Lord Monboddo, and Robert Baker viewed grammar, in fact, as a human invention to make possible clear and distinct communication. The popular idea of a universal grammar stemming from a universal reason was supposed to comprise only those principles of different languages essential to them all. Those who had lived before grammar was discovered were thought to have been unable to convey their thoughts and ideas to one another effectively. Such an attitude toward language was not conducive to objective investigation. And, indeed, logic, analogy, and etymology constituted the articles of faith of the orthodox in regard to correctness in English, as latter portions of this chapter will show.

Nor was it thought that a living language need undergo change. Jonathan Swift writes: "I see no absolute necessity why any language should be perpetually changing; for we find many examples to the contrary. From Homer to Plutarch are above a thousand years; so long at least the purity of the Greek tongue may be allowed to last, and we know not how far before." It is not so important that Swift


nonchalantly lumps a thousand years of history together and foresees the possibility of arresting the development of the English language similarly. More revealing of a general attitude toward language is his equating changelessness with purity, and the corollary implication that change is deterioration.

The intentions and goals of those advocating ascertainment of the language were not altogether undesirable. Certainly some systematizing of the facts of English grammar was needed. Their other two main objectives: first, to settle disputed points and decide cases of divided usage; and second to point out common errors or what were supposed to be errors, and thus correct and improve the language, have produced masses of uninformed and, worse, misinformed users of language today. Too frequently these early grammarians brought to their tasks little more qualification than some familiarity with Latin and Greek. Their search for an absolute correctness revealed much of personal idiosyncrasy, but little of systematic method in approaching language problems.

Often a grammarian ruled out expressions which did not sound good to him or which displeased him. Such activity actually manifested a prejudice which would not bear rational examination. In his famous letter to the Lord High Treasurer, Swift, for example, wrote that many corruptions had entered the English language. There was, first of all, "such an infusion of enthusiastic jargon ... as

15Baugh, op. cit., p. 333.
was not shaken off in many years after." Next came a "licentious-
ness which entered with the Restoration, and ... fell to corrupt our
language." The third corruption, evidenced in the plays, was "a suc-
cession of affected phrases, and new conceited words." Now all
these observations made by Swift are moral judgments based on his
personal system of language ethics. A word or method of expression
that did not conform to what he believed was the correct word or
method of expression was by that very fact to be condemned.

Nor was Swift's reliance upon personal whim unique in the
eighteenth century. Robert Baker, by no means Swift's peer in
sensitivity to language, condemned expressions quite avidly with
such comments as, "There is no such word," "This expression is
wrong," and, "an Expression of great Barbarity." Most curious,
however, was his reasoning in accepting "is risen" and in rejecting
"is lain down." The explanation for this discrimination was, in his
own words, "perhaps no easy matter to tell." The reason was more
accurately impossible to tell. Mere personal taste, so often the
mask of authority in the eighteenth century, was again in evidence.

Another principle used to determine correctness in the use of
the English language was that of logic. In a broad sense, this

16 Scott, Editor, op. cit., p. 142.
17 Leonard, op. cit., p. 36.
18 Ibid.
concept postulated a universal mind which produces a universal grammar in complete harmony with its mode of thought. Grammarians of this order talked in the main of writing with perspicuity and accuracy. Lindley Murray, significantly, inserted this quotation from Blair on his title page: "They who are learning to compose and arrange their sentences with accuracy and order, are learning, at the same time, to think with accuracy and order." Lessons in logic were hence necessary benefits, or at least concomitants, of learning grammar. Composing sentences with subjects and predicates did of course result in formulating what logicians termed propositions. Any misplaced modifier, or other element of the sentence, weakened the validity of the proposition, inasmuch as the statement no longer truly reflected the actual intent of the speaker or writer. Thus if a literal interpretation of the written statement did not correspond to the intended meaning of the writer, he would be deemed guilty of violating the rules of grammar as well as logic.

Trivial matters were seized upon by trivial authors under the aegis of logic. G. Washington Moon in his book *Bad English*, for example, discussed the misuse of superlative adverbs such as "totally," "supremely," "absolutely," and "universally." Moon's position was that such words could logically admit of no qualifiers: "Take, for example, the adverb 'totally.' It is evident that if we attempt to qualify it by prefixing the word 'so,' we convey the idea that there

are degrees of totality; in other words, that a thing may, for
instance, be totally unknown, and yet not totally unknown."20 A
contradiction in terms like this was obviously absurd and intoler-
able, Moon contended. Still fascinated by his compelling display
of logical clarity, the pupil then triumphed over his master on this
note of scorn: "Yet we should scarcely learn this from Lindley
Murray's own language; for, on page 501, he speaks of certain objects
as being 'So totally unknown.'"21

Not only did the principle of logic fail to clear up difficulties
over words, but it even failed to set up clear-cut grammatical categ-
ories.

A more important instrument than logic in the development of a
principle of correctness was analogy, that "extremely important drift
in language through which the exception tends to conform to the rule."22
This principle explains the reason, for example, why so many more
nouns now form their plural with "s" than formerly. Applied to the
English language, this sort of consistency in the eighteenth century
often meant resemblance either to Latin or to Greek. Methods of
expression were thus considered correct if they paralleled methods

20G. Washington Moon, Bad English, p. 17.

21Ibid., p. 18.

22Stuart Robertson and Frederic Cassidy, The Development of
Modern English, p. 115.
usable in the classical languages. Writes Leonard of Harris’ Hermes:

The only instances of such departure that were tolerated are the use in English of the indefinite article, absent from the Greek — admitted, but given no particular value — and the ‘natural genders’ of English, which are praised by Harris and Lowth as offering scope for personification in noble poetry. Otherwise only classic patterns and analogues prevail.

Eventually, a natural reaction against such subservience to Latin and Greek took place. How much longer could the eighteenth century bear to hear that Dryden had translated his doubtful constructions into Latin in order to discover which one he should choose? Or that no writer could be said to have been without recourse to correct grammar when he had always available the examples of Greek and Latin syntax? Still the appeal for consistency or regularity in language was an enticing one. Joseph Priestley stated that "the chief thing to be attended to in the improvement of a language is the analogy of it. The more consistent are its principles, the more it is of a piece with itself, the more commodious it will be for use." Even so, analogy is not an inevitable force toward uniformity: witness the strong verbs, plurals formed without the addition of "s," various orthographic devices for representing the same sound, and different pronunciations of the same graphic symbols.

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23 Leonard, op. cit., p. 50.
24 Quoted in Baugh, op. cit., p. 338.
The futility of analogy as a principle of correctness is then apparent. Krapp identifies the probable reason for its failure in his discussion of "-ly" endings of adjectives and adverbs:

For the simple fact of experience in the language is that adverbs may end in -ly or they may not, as the practice of the language determines, and further, that to apply a rule of correctness mechanically to the language takes the language out of the possession of the vast army of the English speaking people, where it rightly belongs, and delivers it into the hands of a few self-appointed language tinkers and reformers.25

Human beings may prefer the variety of occasional logical anomalies to a monotonously unvarying uniformity of language usage. Poets, instinctive linguists, appreciate the value to be achieved by striking departures from pedestrian conceptions of correctness in grammatical expression. Style benefits from the richness of the language resources of English. Hence there is resistance to the pull of analogy, as well as attraction to it.

Analogy, at any rate, had a natural influence upon the development of the English language that etymology could not duplicate. The former operated often without conscious direction; the other required inquiry into the origin of words. Fondness for the belief that a thing somehow contains its own name and once discovered forever remains the same persists to this day. Note the attitude of a handbook published within the last thirty years: "Dilapidated ... Said of a building or other structure. But the word is from the Latin lapis, a stone, and cannot properly be used of any but a stone structure."26

26Quoted in Robertson and Cassidy, *op. cit.*, p. 234.
This etymological fallacy helps one appreciate the reputed remark of Voltaire that etymology is a science in which the vowels count for nothing and the consonants for very little.27

As a principle of correctness of the English language, etymology had its greatest sway in the eighteenth century when as yet very little was known of how words had come down from other languages into English. Indeed as late as 1889, in the fourteenth edition of English Past and Present, by Trench, information in the preface indicated that all doubtful and false etymologies had been purged by the reviser.28 Errors were made before Trench, of course, and yet users of the language could be and were condemned for their ignorance of etymologies. Sometimes the directly opposite meaning of a word was held up as the correct meaning by recourse to its etymology. Campbell does this exact thing with "to unloose": "The verb to unloose, should analogically signify to tie, in like manner as to untie signifies to loose. To what purpose is it then, to retain a term, without any necessity, in a signification the reverse of that which its etymology manifestly suggests?"29 Clearly this is an appeal for streamlining the English language according to etymological considerations. The way to regulate the English language, apparently,

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lay in properly using words in their "correct," that is, their etymological meaning.

Toward the latter half of the eighteenth century signs began to emerge that the most important principle of correctness in language is usage. Many of the grammarians professed a belief in the doctrine of usage to begin with, but then directly repudiated it by the authoritarian rulings they subsequently developed. Campbell, himself, in the same passage in which he stressed the importance of etymology, avers that where the common understanding of a word plainly differs from the etymological definition, the latter should be dismissed. Theory and practice, obviously, were too often quite at odds with each other.

Unlike Campbell, Priestley remained faithful to his belief that the doctrine of usage was supreme as the principle of correctness in language. In his Rudiments occurs a passage that expounds the doctrine of usage with admirable clarity:

> It must be allowed, that the custom of speaking is the original, and only just standard of any language. We see, in all grammar, that this is sufficient to establish a rule, even contrary to the strongest analogies of the language with itself. Must not this custom, therefore, be allowed to have some weight, in favour of those forms of speech, to which our best writers and speakers seem evidently prone; forms which are contrary to no analogy of the language with itself, and which have been disapproved by grammarians, only from certain abstract and arbitrary considerations, and when their decisions were not prompted by the genius of the language; which discovers itself in nothing more than in the general propensity of those who use it to certain modes of construction? I think, however, that I have not, in any case, seemed to favour what our grammarians
will call an irregularity, but where the genius of the language, and not only single examples but the general practice of those who write it, and the almost universal custom of all who speak it, have obliged me to do so. I also think I have seemed to favour those irregularities, no more than the degree of the propensity I have first mentioned, when unchecked by a regard to arbitrary rules, in those who use the forms of speech I refer to, will authorize me. 30

Enlightened as Priestley’s attitude toward language was, it was by far a minority view. Even among those who had alluded to the sovereignty of usage in determining correctness there followed usually a repudiation, and some other standard, personally believed in, was substituted.

Many of the questions regarding dubious constructions were settled by these personal strictures, it is true, and are no longer problems today. Perhaps the outstanding success that the early grammarians achieved in this regard was their banning of the double negative from correct usage. Proscriptions against the use of the split infinitive and of the preposition at the end of a clause or sentence are further evidences of their influence. Writers today, moreover, still defer to the eighteenth-century-refined distinctions between "shall" and "will" and "who" and "whom." This remains true, ironically, even though we recognize the inappropriateness of the reasons behind those settlements. Hence, in a matter so vital as language, we are still enslaved by the eighteenth-century zeal for ascertainment.

Recognition that actual usage should be the basis for judgments about grammar, syntax, punctuation, and pronunciation is a fairly recent innovation in the study of the English language. Such recognition is not sufficiently widespread, however, to encourage the belief that the teaching of the English language can proceed on this basis in the schools. Sterling A. Leonard's monograph, *Current English Usage*, published in 1932 by a committee of the National Council of Teachers of English, is probably the first important work to popularize the concept of levels of usage. Leonard selected seven groups of judges to pass on the acceptability of various items of usage. These judges, "whose standing qualified them to indicate what seemed to them to be the norm of usage among educated people generally," were comprised of linguistic experts, active members of the National Council of Teachers of English, well known authors, editors of influential publications, leading business men, members of the Modern Language Association, and teachers of speech. Their instructions indicate the scope of the study:

The following list of expressions represent an attempt to present one or more examples from each of the levels or regions of usage suggested by Dr. Murray in the preface to the New English Dictionary. We hope by getting a consensus of expert opinion on the classification of these expressions to clarify and define more precisely the categories themselves. We shall be grateful if you will cooperate by placing in the blank to the left of each expression a number to correspond

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with one of the tentative definitions following. The word or phrase about which there is question of placement is underlined; no other part of the sentence which may perhaps belong to a different level should influence a judgment as to the crucial expression. The problem of pronunciation does not enter.

Score, please, according to your observation of what is actual usage rather than your opinion of what usage should be.32

This study, then, was obviously a sampling of opinion about usage rather than a factual investigation of usage itself. The results, nevertheless, did provide the classroom teacher with considerably more accurate information concerning English usage than did many of the school textbooks. Except for teachers, the reception accorded the Leonard study upon its publication was unfavorable or indifferent.

Marckwardt and Walcott recall:

... Current English Usage was the subject of much adverse journalistic comment both upon its initial appearance and when the second printing was issued. In general, these criticisms were either flippant or indignant; they seized upon what seemed to be some of the most startling of the findings and used them as a point of departure to predict the disintegration of the English language or to question the sanity of the authors. Almost without exception the criticisms were neither penetrating nor constructive.33

Most newspaper editors, perhaps most people, it would seem, have a vested interest in maintaining a high degree of stability in the use of language. Change, inevitable in a living language, often produces symptoms of growing pains in offended users. The pressures to

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32 Ibid., pp. 66-7.
33 Ibid., pp. 1-2.
remain conservative regarding language use is everywhere to be felt in our society.

As discouraging as the wrath of journalists toward *Current English Usage* was the apathy of language scholars and language historians. For these people, "the individuals best qualified not only to make an intelligent appraisal of the results of the Leonard study but to pursue some of the stimulating problems that were raised in it, have given it little notice." Not until Marckwardt and Walcott produced their analysis of the Leonard study, in fact, did its full potential and promise for the advancement of enlightened language study and teaching begin to be recognised. And their study showed how really conservative were the apparently liberal findings of Leonard. Leonard classified his test usages into three categories: established, disputable, and uncultivated or illiterate. Marckwardt and Walcott refute Leonard’s position that the facts of language as recorded in dictionaries are necessarily slower and more conservative than opinion about usage:

That the dictionary record of fact does not lag behind opinion, but on the contrary is well in advance of it, has been clearly demonstrated and needs no amplification. The implication that these disputable expressions are so new that they have not yet had time to be recorded in the dictionaries is likewise not borne out by the facts. Only nine of the 121 disputable expressions were not recorded in any of the sources used, and two of these nine (Nos. 158 and 179) are infelicities in style rather than matters of grammar. The Oxford Dictionary alone recorded all but twenty-three of the 121.

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Of the whole group of 121 disputable expressions, twenty-seven are recorded as arising in the nineteenth century, ten in the eighteenth, twenty in the seventeenth, twenty-two in the sixteenth, and twenty-four sometime before 1500; that is, either in the Middle or Old English periods. In other words, the expressions about which puristic objections center are not so much neologisms as they are old forms and usages of the language which are struggling to survive.

Finally, it is evident that this analysis should dispose once and for all of the journalistic cry of heresy and radicalism so frequently raised against the Leonard report. A survey of fact rather than of opinion would, in all probability, have increased the number of established usages from a meager seventy-one to 177.

Because the linguistic scientist recognizes change in language, and because he regularly describes the existence of nonstandard forms, he is often accused of not having any standards himself. Many people who admire the linguist's zeal for recording facts about language do unfortunately infer that linguists believe "whatever is, is right" concerning language. "Anything goes" is another often-voiced appraisal of the linguist's position by the misinformed public. Speaking for the linguists, Robert Geist is willing to absolve the public of some of its error:

We advocates of a usage standard, however, are at least partially responsible for this opposition to a perfect reasonable idea. In opposing eighteenth-century precepts, we frequently lead others to believe that we advocate truckdrivers' English for everyone; we frequently fail to make clear that we advocate no such thing....

It is impossible, of course, to find absolute lines to separate justifiable improvement of sentences and

diction, the illusions most of us have about educated speech, and the pedantry of those who would keep eighteenth-century rules regardless. As we state our objections to pedantry, we should try to avoid over-statements that invite counter-objections.36

Thus it is again educated or cultivated speech that would be held up as the standard of language to master and teach. Usages appropriate or "correct" for speakers of this dialect are not necessarily so for others, since "correctness" is not an absolute. John B. Carroll puts this concept in proper focus, and then goes on to suggest that usage alone may not be a sufficient criterion for correctness:

The problem of correct usage is complex. Linguistic analysis of the various levels of standard and colloquial speech, with their changes in the course of time, shows that "correctness" is a relativistic concept. A given form is "correct" for a given variety of speech in a given historical period. But since language usage is a marker of cultural, social, and educational status (whether one likes it or not), a speaker must presumably be careful in choosing his forms of expression if he wants social approval from a given group. These are facts which linguists have stressed. An issue which has frequently been overlooked is the bearing of "correctness" on efficiency in communication. Will efficiency of communication be increased or decreased by acceptance or rejection of a given usage? It can be (and has been) argued, for example, that the confusion of the words disinterested and uninterested, if not checked, will lead to a loss of accuracy, with the eventual necessity of developing still another phrase or two to carry the lost meanings. A proposed criterion of whether a given usage is "correct" is whether it is capable of conveying all the intended information without lowering the hearer's opinion of the speaker.37


The history of the secondary school in America shows that it was always concerned with teaching the prestige dialect of English, that form used by the leading members of our society. It is true today, as Hall points out, "... that standard speech is regarded as desirable and necessary by a dominant portion of our community, and that a substandard speaker is going to find certain doors closed against him, certain opportunities denied him, until he acquires standard speech-patterns." 38 A standard speaker, however, may also find that certain doors are closed to him:

In the first place, correct English does not exist in any absolute sense. Correct English is English that goes off well in the situation in which it is used. We are told by some handbooks that it is correct to say "Shall you attend the meeting this evening?" and incorrect to say "Will you attend the meeting this evening?" As a matter of fact, there are relatively few situations in which "Shall you attend?" is correct. It is correct if it sounds right to the person being asked, but there aren't very many such persons in twentieth-century America. Most people will feel the form a trifle strange, and if you are talking to them, the sentence is not quite correct. If you are talking about a meeting of, say, the Sailors' Union of the Pacific, "Shall you attend?" is a gross error. In that situation the correct form is "You gonna go?" 39

With the removal of eighteenth-century absolutism in language and the recognition of the relativism of language in this century, the task of the classroom teacher of English has been further complicated. Many of the rules and pronouncements that he finds in his

38 Robert A. Hall, Jr., Leave Your Language Alone!, p. 189.
39 Paul Roberts, Understanding Grammar, p. 5.
textbook, moreover, apply only to formal written English and not to
cultivated spoken English. The distinctions between "shall" and
"will" and "who" and "whom" belong in this category. Other pro-
nouncements have dubious value for either formal or informal writing
or speech: avoidance of the split infinitive, avoidance of the
final preposition, and rejection of the group genitive.

The treatment of "shall" and "will" as the auxiliaries of the
future tense has been especially complicated. The typical textbook
points out that the distinctions between these two auxiliaries are
being lost in modern English; the paradigm that almost invariably
follows is

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I shall</th>
<th>We shall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You will</td>
<td>You will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He, she, it will</td>
<td>They will</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here the conventional differentiation is that "shall" is used with
the first person and "will" with the second and third persons to
express simple futurity. To express emphasis or strong determination
"shall" and "will" are reversed. C. C. Fries has traced the origin
of these rather fully developed rules to William Ward's Grammar of
the English Language (1765). He quotes Ward on the difference
between the two verbs:

The Verb by shall, States of fixed Order shows;
Or States which Chance directs, as we suppose. And
shall those verbal Future States declares Which for
Itself, an Object hopes or Fears, Thinks of itself,
surmises, or foresees; But which for other Objects it
decrees. . . . The Verb by will those Future States
declares For others, which an Object hopes or fears, 
Of others thinks, surmises or foresees; But for itself, 
States which itself decrees.^\textsuperscript{40}

Thus "shall" in the first person expressed the simple future; in the 
second and third persons, obligation. "Will" in the first person 
expressed volition; in the second and third persons, the future.

Ward's distinctions did not win immediate favor with other 
grammarians of his century:

In many of the grammars before 1765 and in a 
number that followed there is no indication of any 
discrimination between the uses of shall and will in 
the formation of the future. The first grammar fol-
lowing Ward's of 1765 to accept his explanation of 
the meanings of shall and will and incorporate the 
rules he thus derives is that of Lindley Murray of 
1795. Only after the first quarter of the nineteenth 
century did the complete discussion of the rules for 
shall and will in independent-declarative statements, 
in interrogative sentences, and in subordinate clauses 
become a common feature of textbooks of English gram-
mar.^\textsuperscript{41}

These discriminations became solidly implanted in textbooks of 
English grammar primarily because one man set down in print his 
definitions of what these words "meant." No attempt had been made 
by him or his adherents to survey the usage either of the general 
public or of the better writers and speakers. Had they done so, 
such distinctions could not have been made. For in an illuminating 
study, Fries examined some twenty thousand instances of "shall"

\textsuperscript{40} Fries, op. cit., footnote, p.152.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., p. 153.
and "will" occurring in some eighty-six British and American dramas of the last three hundred and fifty years. The conclusion to be reasonably drawn from the data, he reported, was that "the general usage of shall and will did not at any time during the history of Modern English agree with the conventional rules."^2

Though "will" is predominantly preferred over "shall" in American usage, "shall" flourishes in first person questions. There has been an important shift of its force, however:

Some modal distinction is still felt in questions, but it is the reverse of that suggested by the modal meaning of the two words. Those questions in which we use shall are such as call upon the heir for an exercise of will. Thus "Shall we dance?" calls upon the lady to say whether she wants to dance or not. When we simply inquire about a future event, we commonly use will: "Will we get a chance to talk to Marcia?" "Will I be able to get a train back?"^3

Though not so complicated as the "shall/will" distinctions, the acceptable uses of "who" and "whom" plague many fledgling writers. Traditional grammarians are quite sure in their treatment of the differences between these two pronouns. "Whom" is used as an object of various kinds or as a subject of an infinitive. "Who" is used in every other substantive position. This distinction has a clarity never attained by the subtle complexities of "shall" and "will."

But neither clarity nor the authority of these grammarians is enough

^2 Ibid., p. 154.

to arrest a trend in language. In 1928, the *Oxford English Dictionary* was able to state that "whom" was no longer current "in natural colloquial speech." "In fact," writes Roberts, "an assiduous cultivation in speech of the textbook distinction of who/whom is likely to give one's associates the feeling that one is affected and artificial -- perhaps, indeed, an English teacher in sheep's clothing." 

These observers agree that writing still maintains the distinctions between "who" and "whom" albeit the task is complicated by the loss of these distinctions in speech. Porter Perrin illustrates the writer's difficulty and suggests some reason for the leveling of the distinctions:

The struggle to make writing conform to grammatical rules of case is consequently difficult and full of problems. Whom consistently occurs only when it immediately follows a preposition as object (I don't know to whom I should go). But since the preposition often comes last in the expression, in general usage we find who (I don't know who I should go to). The most important reason for the development of this usage is that we no longer expect to have the form indicate the case function (except genitive). None of the other relative pronouns show case function by form, nor do the nouns (again except genitives); and the personal pronouns are too few to keep us sensitive to case forms. Three other factors combine to make this who construction usual: (1) the position before the verb -- the "subject territory," (2) the infrequent use of whom in speech, and (3) our habit of not using relative pronouns to introduce clauses (I know the man whom you mean).

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45 *Perrin, op. cit.*, p. 764.
The justification for teaching the uses of these variant forms, then, is based on the necessity of the writer to conform to the expectations of his formal audience. Though they are a small percentage of the population, there are readers whose training causes them shock when "shall" and "will" are interchanged or "who" is used for "whom." It is primarily to satisfy the demands of this group, a very influential one, that English curriculums continue to point out these distinctions.

The acceptability of such constructions as the split infinitive, however, raises a different problem. There is real question about the status of this construction in the different levels of usage. The split infinitive occurs when a word, usually an adverb, appears between the sign of the infinitive to and the infinitive itself. Some grammarians consider the "split" infinitive a misnomer, "since to is not historically or necessarily a part of the infinitive -- just as there can scarcely be hesitation about splitting the predication he regrets or the participial phrase of regretting." 46 Examples of the split infinitive are to be found on all levels of usage. Fries reported that "the so-called 'split' infinitive ... is not a matter of Vulgar English. Of the twenty instances appearing in our materials eighteen were found in the letters of Standard English." 47

46 Robertson and Cassidy, op. cit., p. 301.

47 Fries, op. cit., p. 145.
No one has surpassed H. W. Fowler's brilliant and witty discussion of attitudes toward split infinitives under his five headings:

"The English-speaking world may be divided into (1) those who neither know nor care what a split infinitive is; (2) those who do not know but care very much; (3) those who know & condemn; (4) those who know & approve; & (5) those who know & distinguish." 48

In recent decades linguists have been successfully convincing others that split infinitives are not only permissible devices but sometimes even necessary ones. Good writers, in fact, have always made use of this construction. Jespersen lists occurrences in Wilde, Butler, Stevenson, Hardy, Shaw, Meredith, Kipling, Galsworthy, Wells, Arnold Dickens, Walpole, and other British authors; and in such American authors as Dreiser, Norris, Lewis, and Bromfield.49

Why the use of this construction is often preferable to any alternative may be gleaned from this stand of Fowler's:

We maintain, however, that a real split infinitive, though not desirable in itself, is preferable to real ambiguity, & to patent artificiality. We will rather write Our object is to further cement trade relations than, by correcting into Our object is further to cement . . . , leave it doubtful whether an additional object or additional cementing is the point. And we take it that such reminders of a tyrannous convention as in not combining to forbid flatly hostilities are far more abnormal than the abnormality they evade. We will split infinitives sooner than be ambiguous or artificial. More than that, we will freely admit that sufficient recasting will get

49 Cited in Robertson and Cassidy, op. cit., footnote, p. 301.
rid of any split infinitive without involving either of those faults, & yet reserve to ourselves the right of deciding in each case whether recasting is worth while.50

Another often-sounded proscription that is now being carefully reconsidered is the avoidance of the final preposition. Winston Churchill should probably receive some credit for making adherence to the proscription less popular. When a minor official revised one of the Prime Minister's sentences to avoid the final preposition, Churchill reputedly wrote back, "This is the sort of arrant pedantry up with which I will not put"! Another Englishman, John Dryden, is responsible for the original formation of the proscription:

Dryden's sudden realization that in Latin the preposition never comes last in the sentence moved him to recast the English sentences of his prefaces in order to eliminate what he had come to feel as barbarous. His influence has been amazingly powerful; school grammar after school grammar has repeated the warning against the prepositional ending, in spite of its continued use in the best speech and writing. A wrong use of etymology has even been drawn in to further the movement that Dryden began; the literal implication of preposition has often been invoked to prove that a preposition should not come last.51

Of course rhetorical considerations often argue against the placing of a weak word like a preposition in the strong position at the end of a sentence. Nevertheless, deferring the preposition to the end of a sentence is a characteristic idiom that has become a useful part of the language.


51Robertson and Cassidy, op. cit., p. 319.
Another idiom that is used extensively in colloquial English today is the group genitive: "the King of England's decision," "the man in the blue suit's wife," "the man in the street's opinion," for example, where the 's is placed immediately before the noun that the genitive modifies. One group genitive, everybody else's has triumphed over the formerly used everybody's else, which Current English Usage found to be "disputable." The comments made by linguists about the latter construction include the following: "Artificial," "Pedantic," "Nowhere used," (British) and "Not English -- pseudo-correction by the semi-literate for everybody else's, which is good colloquial English." Leonard concludes his discussion of this usage with the significant information that "English teachers, possibly influenced by the pronouncements of sundry handbooks, would place this among established usages. Over half the linguists, on the other hand, consider the expression as illiterate or semi-literate. There can be no question, at any rate, that 'everybody else's' is infinitely to be preferred."

It is clear, then, that there is divided opinion about the appropriateness and even the acceptability of numerous expressions in English. Many of the linguistic practices of good speakers are condemned in school textbooks; whereas other expressions, considered "illiterate" by linguists, are encouraged therein. What is the

52Markwardt and Walcott, op. cit., p. 81.

53Ibid.
embattled classroom teacher of English to do? One of the conclusions reached in the *Current English Usage* study sets forth clearly the course that the enlightened teacher will follow:

There are expressions which are condemned by most handbooks and which are listed among improper usages in the chapters on diction in many school rhetorics but which are nevertheless in frequent use by educated speakers. It might be wise not to assign such chapters to pupils until the acceptability of the expressions has been checked by the findings of this study.\(^5^4\)

The reader is then exhorted to consult the index for such entries as "not-as; reason why; none are; healthy for healthful; pretty good; back of; the use of shall, will, should, would, etc.; try and; got to; the split infinitive; slow and other adjective forms used as adverbs (see index under adverbs); fix for repair; the position of only, etc."\(^5^5\) It may be a melancholy fact that it seems necessary to caution teachers of English against the unreliable nature of many of the texts that purport to discuss the facts of the English language. A twentieth-century publication date, however, does not assure a modern, scientific view of language. One workbook labels as wrong, for example, the following sentences: The great man's memory is still cherished. Here is the principle alleged to be violated in the preceding sentence: "The possessive form of a noun should be used to indicate actual possession, but not to indicate the object

\(^5^4\)Ibid., p. 135.

\(^5^5\)Ibid.
of an action. Under case, the same workbook lists nominative, accusative, dative, and genitive for both nouns and pronouns. Today's conscientious teacher of English must not only be able to reject such puristic absolutism, but he must also stay abreast of current linguistic theory, be familiar with the results of various investigations of English usage, and be ever sensitive to the actual linguistic behavior of his community, a community which radio and television have enormously expanded.

This alert teacher of English will be aware of the considerable study being made of currently vexatious problems of usage. The pages of American Speech, for example, are filled with the scholarly results of thorough investigations. At times these studies uncover problems that have been overlooked in handbooks and textbooks; at other times, the studies tend to refute the treatment to be found in these sources. Respective illustrations for these two general categories would be "Number Concord with What-Clauses" in the February, 1955, issue and "One of Those Who Is..." in the October, 1951, issue.

Francis Christensen, the investigator in the first study, found that "What-Clauses" are not usually discussed in the number concord headings of school grammars and textbooks. Over a period of five years he collected one hundred such sentences, sixty-two of which had plural copulas. He divided these into three groups on the basis of

56 Walter S. Guiler and Ralph L. Henry, Remedial English, p. 100.
the number of what: (1) what plural; (2) what singular; (3) what undetermined. Examples of these divisions are (1) "What storms lie ahead are not indicated" and "Sometimes what appear to be disciplinary problems are easily solved by very elementary applied psychology"; (2) "What is not going to change in this Congress are the issues it must face" and "What impresses them are planes and divisions and ships"; and (3) "What they want are promises" and "... what he shows us here (as in Epsom Wells) are Londoners on a holiday."

Christensen dismissed any single attempt to explain why "plurals in the predicate complement position are associated with plural copulas" and concluded:

What this all adds up to, finally, is/are a set of rules rather than a single one, accounted for by a set of principles rather than a single one: (1) Plural what regularly selects a plural verb in the main clause, but singular or undetermined what does not regularly select a singular verb. (2) A plural form (not a plural by compounding) in the predicate complement position controls the copula -- whether by attraction or by being taken for the subject -- more often by far than does the noun clause in the subject position. In this situation one cannot say with Professor Kenyon that what has a double construction without admitting that what does not control the pattern of concord except when it is plural. On the other hand, the notion of a plural clause merely recognizes a fact and gives it a name without explaining it.57

The what-clause construction has received scant attention in the usual grammars; the handling of the "One of those who is/are..." construction, however, is quite uniform and extensive: Who is plural

because its antecedent *those* is plural and hence the plural verb *are* is required. But in the article "One of Those Who Is. . .," John S. Kenyon presented a sufficient number of examples like his title to show that these expressions are good usage and not merely mistakes. The items presented, gleaned only from his incidental reading, were taken from such writers as Shakespeare, Swift, John Wesley, Cowper, Boswell, Thomas Jefferson, Sir Walter Scott, Shelley, Macaulay, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Louis Bromfield, William Allen White, Dorothy Thompson, and even the translator(s) who produced the tenth-century Old English Gospel of John. Since logic and most grammar books disallow the singular verb in this construction, and since it nevertheless appears to be a regular feature of English from the earliest times, a revision of the grammar of this expression was all the more necessary to make. For, as Kenyon concluded:

> When we say of the construction here in question that it is ungrammatical, we can only mean that it fails to conform to our notion of grammar, mostly inherited from the eighteenth century before the existence of a true science of language, and ultimately derived from Latin grammar, which differs greatly from the grammar of English. If this construction does not conform to our ideas of grammar, then our description of the locution is not complete and needs revision. The facts are clear and abundant, and if there is no 'rule' of grammar to allow for them, such rule should be made. But it should describe the facts, not prescribe what is supposed to be proper, like the rules of Lindley Murray.58

The fact that many prescriptive handbooks and texts of the Murray tradition exist suggests that these publications are

supplying a demand. The unfortunate but necessary inference is that a large proportion of the public believes that grammar is the base of acceptable usage. A teacher who wants his pupils to learn a grammar based on acceptable usage may appear unorthodox to an important segment of his community. Yet the National Council of Teachers is quite straightforward and liberal in the objectives of its language program:

The teaching of grammar to students in American secondary schools should be soundly based on the facts of American English. This statement recognized that the English language has many varieties, and that the study of American English is appropriate in American schools. The more learned one is in English, the more interested he is in the variations of the language; and the more learned one is in American English, the more interested he is in the various "levels" and dialects, or regional varieties, of which it is composed. Here, incidentally, is common meeting ground for the high school student and the scholar. They both find interesting the ways in which people in different localities talk.59

It is certainly not asking too much of a high-school graduate that he be able to observe and discuss intelligently the ways in which his language is being used. Here, indeed, lies one of the liberalizing benefits of an enlightened approach to language study: Each pupil becomes his own grammarian. Of course a classroom containing thirty or so grammarians may be a difficult one to guide through the unlandscaped territory of the language. A map, some kind of organization, is desirable. Aside from the many surveys of usage that

have been made, there are also helpful lists of usages structured for teaching purposes. Such a one is Pooley's, intended for curriculum building:

1. The elimination of all babyltalk and "cute" expressions.

2. The correct use of I, me, he, him, she, her, they, them, (Exception, it's me.)

3. The correct use of is, are, was, were, with respect to number and tense.

4. Correct past tenses of common irregular verbs such as saw, gave, took, brought, bought, stuck.

5. Correct use of past participles of the same verbs and similar verbs after auxiliaries.

6. Elimination of the double negative: We don't have no apples, etc.

7. Elimination of analogical forms: Ain't, hisn, hern, ourn, theirselves, etc.

8. Correct use of possessive pronouns: My, mine, his, hers, theirs, ours.

9. Mastery of the distinction between its, possessive pronoun, and it's, it is.

10. Placement of have or its reduction to 've between I and a past participle.

11. Elimination of them as a demonstrative pronoun.

12. Elimination of this here and that there.

13. Mastery of use of a and an as articles.

14. Correct use of personal pronouns in compound constructions: as subject (Mary and I), as object (Mary and me), as object of preposition (to Mary and me).

15. The use of we before an appositional noun when subject; us when object.

16. Correct number agreement with the phrase there is, there are, there was, there were.
17. Elimination of *he don't*, *she don't*, *it don't*.

18. Elimination of *learn* for *teach*, *leave* for *let*.

19. Elimination of pleonastic subjects: *my brother he*; *my mother she*; *that fellow he*.

20. Proper agreement in number with antecedent pronouns *one* and *anyone*, *everyone*, *each*, *no one*. With *everybody* and *none* some tolerance of number seems acceptable now.

21. The use of *who* and *whom* as reference to persons. (But note, *Who did he give it to?* is tolerated in all but very formal situations, in which *To whom did he give it?* is preferable.)

22. Accurate use of *said* in reporting the words of a speaker in the past.

23. Correction of *lay down* to *lie down*.

24. The distinction between *good* as adjective and *well* as adverb; e.g., *He spoke well*.

25. Elimination from writing of *can't* hardly, *all the farther* (for *as far as*) and *Where is he* (*she, it*) at? 60

Pooley is the first to point out that these twenty-five categories cannot be considered unchangeable, usage being as flexible as it is. Users of the language may often choose between acceptable alternatives of expression. But these items do meet the criteria of accuracy of communication and social acceptability. They are therefore the items to be corrected in pupils' writing and speaking by instruction and practice. Items like the distinction between "shall" and "will,"

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the split infinitive, and "like" as a conjunction are grouped among eight borderline usages that may be pointed out as preferable forms in the writing or formal speech of the superior students.61

The classroom teacher of English, therefore, does not lack the resources necessary to bring about the revolution of instruction that the area of usage so desperate needs. Linguists have exposed the shortcomings of the eighteenth-century grammarians and have also produced a body of findings concerning language that can readily be adapted for the secondary schools. Professional groups like the National Council of Teachers of English have endorsed the objectives of linguists regarding language study. The next move must be made in the classroom.

61 Ibid., p. 19.
CHAPTER V

VOCABULARY ENRICHMENT THROUGH THE STUDY OF SEMANTICS

In considering the nature of human expression, sponsors of programs for the secondary-school English class generally restrict their definition of language in order to focus attention on one very important function: the communication of thought. The English language is dealt with as a body of words used by a fairly large group of people to transmit their feelings and ideas. Each person in the group of course has a differing range and depth of experience and feeling. His use of the language therefore becomes a somewhat private one, for he gives expression to that which has affected him uniquely. In fact the primary use of language, according to LaBrant, is "to enable one human being to convey something of his private experience to another."\(^1\) But language is public property; many people share in the meaning of words. Herein lies the primary abuse of language. For a word does not have a single, formal, universally accepted meaning; more often it has several meanings and connotations, and its effect upon the listener depends upon the wealth of his experience and the power of his intellect.

Underlying the entire search into the nature of human expression are basic philosophical questions about man's ability to know objective reality. Probably everybody resolves these fundamental

\(^1\)Lou LaBrant, *We Teach English*, p. 21.
problems for himself, either formally, through studied analysis, or implicitly, by simply assuming the intelligibility of matter. To deny this intelligibility is to fall into the labyrinth of skepticism, a mental maze in whose twisted passages straight thinking is a contradiction. If man cannot know things as they are, the theory that language is a tool for the communication of thought must be rejected.

Even where there is general agreement about the nature of reality and man's ability to know it, however, individual differences in human beings still exert their influence. Thus at times the most judicious selection of words carries with it overtones and shades of meaning at variance with what the user intended or desired. The reason for this diversity is that each word conveys more than just its meaning. It connotes something extra, its associated field -- that whole range of experiences that are summarized by the one symbol. It is this associated field which is the main obstacle in the path toward a more exact form of communication through the English language. Instead of bringing about a meeting of minds -- the goal of perfect communication -- language sometimes creates misunderstandings, ignorance, and ill-will.

The lack of a sufficient lexicon to describe all the experiences of a civilization may be another obstacle to communication. Here is one statement of a principle of language growth: "As we have developed in the complexity of our civilization, as our experiences have multiplied in number beyond any possible number of words, we have had to
use abstract terms to include many objects, experiences, ideas. These abstractions tend to become vague and therefore misleading.2 Abstract terms become vague because the referent is not tangible, but exists in the mind of the user. And each mind functions differently. This fact, coupled with the associated field that each word carries, accounts to a large extent for the many difficulties that arise in communication.

To facilitate the communicative process, the secondary-school English program might undertake to accomplish two general objectives regarding the wordstock. The first is to account in some systematic fashion for the mass of words that make up the vocabulary of English. The procedures by which words are formed originally should prove an interesting study for the high-school population; it might additionally result in an increased personal vocabulary for many boys and girls. The second objective involves the personal vocabularies of high-school pupils. To ensure that pupils will not be tyrannized by the words they know, the curriculum should include materials from the field of semantics, which emphasizes among other things the relation between the word and its referent. Together, these two undertakings might develop pupils who use with greater effectiveness and precision an ever-increasing personal vocabulary.

In order to appreciate more fully the resources of the English vocabulary, the American secondary-school pupil needs to study a great deal more of the history of his language than the present curriculum includes. An awareness of how the English language originated and developed ought to be part of every pupil's intellectual background. The little that is known about such early languages as Anglo-Saxon would not overburden the present curriculum, but the inclusion of these materials in courses of study would enrich the language arts programs in the secondary schools. The Middle English period in the history of the English language might be sketched in for its value in explaining great changes in grammar and for its contributions to the wordstock. Finally, the study of Modern English would be enriched by the historical perspective thus afforded pupils.

Whatever the early inhabitants of England spoke, they did not speak English. "The first people in England about whose language we have definite knowledge are the Celts." Some modern descendants of this language are Irish, Scotch Gaelic, and Manx. Caesar's attempted conquest of Britain in 55 B.C., a near fiasco, and the actual conquest by Emperor Claudius a hundred years later introduced the Latin language into England. It flourished there for almost four hundred years, until the early part of the fifth century, when their mounting problems forced the Romans to withdraw from the island. The Celts were once again in possession of England. Around the middle of the

3Albert C. Baugh, A History of the English Language, p. 49.
fifth century, according to the traditional account given by the ecclesiastical historian, the Venerable Bede, tribes of Angles, Saxons, and Jutes began invading England. The Celts were either subdued or exterminated. And the language of the Anglo-Saxon tribes, Germanic peoples from the regions of what is now Schleswig-Holstein, became the language of England. Thus fourteen hundred years ago, in A.D. 550, did English begin in England. The thousands of years, perhaps tens of thousands of years, that languages were spoken there by prehistoric man must remain forever unknowable.

It is an interesting exercise to contemplate the various influences that had already affected the language of the Anglo-Saxons by A.D. 550. The chief contribution of Celtic to Old English lay in place-names; otherwise, fewer than twenty words can be reasonably attributed to Celtic sources. Latin, on the other hand, had considerably more effect upon Old English in three distinct periods. First of all, the Germanic tribes who later invaded England had had contact with Roman soldiers and merchants for several hundred years. During this extensive period, many Latin words had been adopted into their language. When these tribes occupied England in the fifth century, they were further influenced, through Celtic transmission, by the long Latin domination of the island. Finally, with the introduction of Christianity into England in 597, the last and greatest Latin influence on Old English took place.

\[\text{Ibid., p. 85.}\]
The Middle English period in the history of the language, approximately from 1150 to 1500 according to Baugh, ushered in lasting and profound changes in the grammar of English. It was largely during this period that the highly inflected forms of Old English underwent a process of revision that resulted in the loss of many inflections. The noun, pronoun, adjective, and verb were all to some extent simplified. As inflections were being reduced in Middle English, the feature of grammatical gender was also abandoned; natural gender, the sex of the individual, exclusively determined the gender of English nouns. Many of these changes would undoubtedly still have been made even had there been no Norman Conquest. The Norman Conquest, however, facilitated the rapid changes in sound structure and grammar. With Norman French the language of the upper classes in England for several hundred years after the Conquest, it is not difficult to understand why the language of the masses, English, largely a spoken language, should be unable to preserve its inflectional endings intact.

There is a fairly widespread notion regarding present-day English that the advent of mass media of communication has virtually stifled further change in language. Perhaps the rate of change is slower compared to other periods of the history of English. In his article, "How Fast Is Standard English Changing?" however, Karl Dykema, noting first the many difficulties of establishing relative

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5Paul Roberts, Understanding English, p. 40.
rates of linguistic change in the history of a language, comes to this tentative conclusion: "But for the Standard English of the United States during the past ten to fifteen years, I think we might cautiously assert that there has been some increase in rate of change..." Speculation about linguistic history, paradoxically, is somewhat more hazardous when there is an abundance of materials available. Generalizations based on scanty data of course, such as those of the Old English period, tend to oversimplify what must have been complex events. A reasonable attitude about the importance of linguistic history for modern English is put forth in this liberal creed of Baugh's:

...some knowledge of the history of English in the past is necessary to an enlightened judgment in matters affecting present use. Such knowledge warns us to beware of making arbitrary decisions on questions which only time can settle. It teaches us that reason is but a sorry guide in many matters of grammar and idiom, and that the usage of educated speakers and writers is the only standard in language for the educated. It should make us tolerant of colloquial and regional forms, since like the common people, they claim their right to exist by virtue of an ancient lineage. And finally, it should prepare us for further changes since language lives only on the lips and fingers of living people and must change as the needs of people in expressing themselves change.

The reasons adduced by Baugh emphasize the importance of including materials from linguistic history in the secondary-school English program.

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7 Baugh, op. cit., p. 403.
Many people hold unsophisticated views about the relative advantages of Anglo-Saxon and foreign word elements in the English lexicon. It is difficult to arrive at an exact count of the number of native versus borrowed words in English because there are several different methods of counting the words. Basing the count on the words that appear in a comprehensive dictionary, though the resulting figures would be precise and verifiable, would equate the extremely rare word with the very common. Limiting the count to a certain number of active words in the dictionary has likewise a disqualifying feature: As the sample number is increased, the proportion of borrowed words also increases. The best method for obtaining a true picture of the composition of the English wordstock is

... that of counting not different words only, but rather counting every word every time it is used, in a piece of writing or of conversation. ... almost all prepositions, conjunctions, articles, pronouns, and auxiliary verbs -- exactly the words most often repeated -- are of native origin, as are also the greater number of familiar nouns, adjectives, and verbs. Of the 500 words most frequently used in present-day English, according to Thorndike's well-known word count the native words are 72 per cent, the borrowed 28 per cent; and furthermore, the derivatives of the native words are three times as numerous as those of the borrowed words.9

Shakespeare, whose writings reputedly are composed of 90 per cent of native words, and the King James Bible, with 94 per cent,10 provide

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9 Ibid., p. 174.
10 Ibid.
powerful testimonials to the effectiveness of the native wordstock. The addition of words from Greek, Latin, French, and other languages, nevertheless, strengthens the possibilities for achieving precise expression in English. One of the advantages of the English language indeed is its plentiful synonyms, or near synonyms, which permit nicely drawn distinctions to be made. Whether the most effective word is of native stock or from another language ought not concern the writer; the word that most closely expresses his thought should be selected. A dependence on the learned diction of borrowed words may result in stilted, pompous prose. Jespersen, a champion of the return to "Saxon" words, cites a newspaper story illustrating the fascination exerted by impressive words on the "half-educated":

The young lady home from school was explaining. "Take an egg," she said, "and make a perforation in the base and a corresponding one in the apex. Then apply the lips to the aperture, and by forcibly inhaling the breath the shell is entirely discharged of its contents." An old lady who was listening exclaimed: "It beats all how folks do things nowadays. When I was a gal they made a hole in each end and sucked."11

The diction of the old lady, Jespersen would point out, is the kind of expression which is best characterized as crisp, direct, and natural. A certain type of borrowed words receives this censure from Jespersen:

The unnatural state into which the language has been thrown by the wholesale adoption of learned words is further manifested by the fact that not a few of them have no fixed pronunciation; they are, in fact,

11 Otto Jespersen, Growth and Structure of the English Language, p. 1149.
eye-words that do not really exist in the language. Educated people freely write them and understand them when they see them written, but are more or less puzzled when they have to pronounce them.

Examples of such eye-words are "distribist," "phonotypy," "photochrome," "hegemony," and "phthisis."\(^*_1^2\)

No doubt the Jespersen position tends somewhat to an exaggeration of the difference between native and borrowed words in English. Much more exposure to the materials of linguistic history would be necessary before people in general, or high-school pupils in particular, would be able to classify even a small percentage of the English lexicon into the two categories. Certainly such borrowed words as "beef," "chair," "clock," and "face" appear by now to be as natively English as the original vocabulary inherited from the Anglo-Saxons. The use of the so-called eye-words of Jespersen, which must undergo some translation before they can be understood, probably conceals rather than communicates the user's thoughts. Simplicity of diction, other things being equal, is a worthwhile dictum for the English speaker or writer.

Interesting though the controversy between native words and borrowed words may be, it is probably with the ways words are created that the English curriculum ought most to deal. What are the processes by which the English language incorporates new words into its wordstock? Native and borrowed words are certainly important,

\(^*_1^2\)Ibid., p. 146.
but English would have become an impoverished language if it did not coin labels for new attitudes, processes, discoveries, and ideas.

One fairly comprehensive treatment of word-formation devices in English lists the following:

1. New Creations
2. Echoism
3. Gradation
4. Compounding
5. Derivation
6. Back-Formation
7. Shortening
8. Conversion
9. Words from Names
10. Blending
11. Acronyms
12. Authors' Contributions

These twelve points can be grouped under three general headings by which English forms its new words: (1) Root Creations, which include the first two methods listed; (2) Adaptation, which is composed of the next nine methods; and (3) the Contributions of Authors.

Root Creations

The actual creation of new words in English without building on other words or word-elements is a rare occurrence, even though the number of possible monosyllables alone is potentially enormous. Jespersen's calculations show how large that number may be. Taking the twenty-one simple initial consonants, the forty-five initial consonant-groups, the eighteen simple final consonants, the one hundred final consonant-groups, and the twenty-one vowels and

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13 Robertson and Cassidy, op. cit., pp. 185-231.
diphthongs, he states: "The result of my calculation is that the phonetic structure of the English language as actually spoken in our own times would admit the possibility of rather more than 158,000 monosyllables."\(^{14}\) Most coinages make use of apparent analogies with already existing words. Two famous examples of deliberately invented words, both trade names that are aggressively advertised, are "Kodak" and "Zipper."\(^{15}\)

The other method for creating entirely new roots in English is the echoic, or onomatopoetic. The sounds of such words are supposed to imitate or echo the sounds of their referents. Words like "hiss," "shh," and "murmur" are thus thought to have originated from the sounds made in the verbs named. Though the onomatopoetic theory of word origin, even of language origin, seems to account for at least a small part of the language, it cannot be pushed very far:

... sheer echoisms are not words; they become words when they are conventionalised in terms of the sound-patterns of the imitator's language. Thus to a German the cock crows "Kikeriki"; to a Frenchman "Cocorico"; to an Englishman "Cook-a-doodle-doo" — not because cocks crow differently in Germany, France, and England, but because these forms are the imitations conventional to each language. Furthermore, once an echoism, duly conventionalized, has entered a language, it is subject to the same kinds of language-change as any other word, and may thus be altered in the course of time until its echoic origin is no longer perceived.\(^{16}\)

\(^{14}\) Otto Jespersen, Monosyllabism in English, p. 9.

\(^{15}\) Baugh, op. cit., p. 367.

\(^{16}\) Robertson and Cassidy, op. cit., p. 6.
It is therefore virtually impossible to know with certainty how many words have come into the English language by way of their similarity of sound to natural noises of various sorts. In present-day English, echoism is seldom an active method for word creation.

**Adaptation**

Most of the new words that come into the English language are differentiated from already existing words by means of one of the nine methods previously listed. One of these methods, gradation, is no longer an active principle in making new words. In earlier times, it had been "responsible for the similarity in form and sound of a number of groups of words related in meaning." It is the process of gradation, for example, that accounts for the series of so-called strong verbs in English: "sing-sang-sung," "ring-rang-rung," or "see-saw-seen." In each of these series, a slight change in form varies the meaning correspondingly.

By far the most active principle of word-formation today is compounding, the joining of two or more words to form a new term. The vitality of compounding springs partially from the many combinations of parts of speech that may be joined to form entirely new words:

1. Noun with noun: **rail-road, chest-cold, house-top.**
2. Noun with adjective: **coal-black, air-tight**
3. Adjective with noun: **black-berry, hot-house, sweet-meat**

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17 Ibid., p. 190.
At times a criterion for identifying compounds looms important in an investigator's writing. Bloomfield evidences such concern in his effort to show that stress differentiates a true compound from a syntactic phrase:

A form like blackbird resembles a two-word phrase (black bird), but we shall find that a consistent description of English is bound to class this form as a single (compound) word. In this case there is a clear-cut difference, since in blackbird the second word (bird), has a weaker stress instead of a normal high stress...19

For others, the problems conjured up by compounding are more pedestrian:

Clean compounding is a source of strength. Slack, untidy compounding is in itself a weakness. Compounding ranks with correct spelling, good grammar, sensible capitalizing, helpful punctuation and logical division of words as a contribution to understanding between writer and reader. It is an elementary, fundamental, essential and indispensable factor in effective communication through use of paper and ink.20

18Ibid., pp. 191-92.
20Edward Teall, Meet Mr. Hyphen, p. 23.
Compounding has appeal for both scholarly and utilitarian interests. On the one hand, the subject matter of compounding is somewhat difficult to describe; and on the other, the practical problems it raises need somehow to be solved. The technical terminology resorted to in one treatment of compounding is a good indication of the complexity of the subject: "Compound Endocentric Substantives," "Compound Exocentric Substantives," "Reduplicative Compounds," and "Compounds with Locative Particles as First Elements."\(^\text{21}\) Each of these headings is discussed and documented in considerable detail. Under the heading "Compound Endocentric Substantives," for example, Marchand distinguishes the following types:

rainbow
fighter-bomber / slave girl
all-soul / self-rule
craftsman / bull's-eye
writing-table / dancing-girl
whetstone / rattlesnake
blackbird / blacksmith / New England / north-east
he-goat / she-dog
house-keeping
earthquake / stronghold
householder / all-seer / self-seeker / sharpshooter
Jack-straw / tomfool
Fitzherbert / Mac Arthur / Kirkpatrick\(^\text{22}\)

Further testimony to the complexity of compounding is offered in the opening sentence of Bell's study: "Judging from the repeated statements of grammarians and lexicographers, there is probably no phase of English literature which has caused greater uncertainty of

\(^{21}\)Hans Marchand, The Categories and Types of Present-Day English Word-Formation, pp. 21, 37, 45, 66.

\(^{22}\)Ibid., pp. 21-36. (Italics omitted.)
of mind or resulted in greater inconsistency of practice than the compounding of words."23 The variant authorities analyzed in the ensuing pages reveal the inconsistency in compounding that is foreshadowed in that first sentence. This very inconsistency adds to the vitality of compounding as a word-forming principle in English. When something is done inconsistently, almost anyone with a logical sense can spot the "error":

That the naive speaker may, however, be very much aware of grammatical distinctions in compounding may be seen from the following humorous lead-article from The New Yorker magazine for December 15, 1956:

"Notes and Comment The rapid growth of superhighways, according to the National Association of Travel Organizations (known for short as NATO), has revived an old compound word -- "shun-piking." Shun-piking means the passing up of monotonous turnpikes for old-fashioned, easy-going byroads (initially for the purpose of avoiding tolls but now for the simple purpose of avoiding turnpikes), and in NATO's approving eyes the people who follow this practice are shun-pikers. We wonder if shun-pikers shouldn't more properly be called pike-shunners. A head-hunter is someone who hunts heads, not someone who heads hunts. The latter would be a hunt-header, or an Ernest Hemingway, who is also a pike-shunner from way back, since he prefers marlin."24

The pull of the analogy of "head-hunter" is indeed too strong to be resisted in this instance; "pike-shunner" probably has greater appeal to the logically minded than does the less defensible "shun-piker." On matters like these does compounding thrive.

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Another active principle of word-formation in English is derivation, by which process new words are formed from older ones by means of the addition of affixes, either prefixes or suffixes. Because there are many active prefixes and suffixes, the process of derivation accounts for a large number of words in English. Though a great deal of linguistic history is bound up in the various affixes that have been developed for English, and though many prefixes and suffixes are of foreign origin, a listing of these forms seems sufficient for indicating the broadness of derivation in word-formation.

In alphabetical order, Marchand first lists commonly used prefixes and then suffixes:

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Affixes still active in English word-formation, as the above lists indicate, have not all been inherited from Old English; many have been borrowed from Greek, Latin, and French. Only purists seem to be disturbed when foreign affixes are added to native roots, as in "amazement," "rebuild," "goddess," "co-worker," "dishearten," and "anteroom"; or when native affixes are added to foreign roots, as in "useful," "graceful," and "beautiful."26 Familiar suffixes like "-ness," "-some," "-ful," and "-less," all of native origin, can be freely added to native or foreign roots. The Latin "-al" and the Greek "-ist" are likewise frequently added to roots not borrowed from the respective languages. Any attempt to apply the principle of purity in word-formation seems doomed to failure: "Consider . . . the implication of such a form as re-macadamized. Here is a word that will not strike most of its users as in any way objectionable or eccentric. Yet re- is Latin, mac is Celtic, adam is Hebrew, -ize is French (originally Greek), and -d is English."27 The purists


26 Robertson and Cassidy, op. cit., p. 196.

27 Ibid., p. 201.
have simply arrived too late on the scene, by thousands of years in fact, to affect the language in the pervasive manner that could be achieved only if there were no hybrid formations in English.

Whereas compounding and derivation result in new word-formations that are longer, the processes of back-formation and shortening have an opposite effect. Back-formations are words that have been mistakenly considered to be derived forms, forms derived from really non-existent bases which become the new additions to the wordstock. In shortening, new words are formed by removing part of an established word. At times, the back part is eliminated, as in "mob" for "mobile vulgus" and "photo" for "photograph"; in others, the front of the word is omitted, as in "sport" for "disport" and "wig" for "periwig."

Conversion, of functional shift, is that process in which a word is used as another part of speech. Since the form of the word itself does not change, a dictionary count might not reflect the actual additions to the wordstock; but new words have been formed just as effectively as by the other word-formation devices. Jespersen has found that "nearly every word for the different parts of the body has given rise to a homonym verb, though it is true that some of them are rarely used"; he lists twenty-three examples: eye, nose, lip, beard, tongue, brain, jaw, ear, chin, arm, shoulder, elbow, hand, fist, finger, thumb, breast, body, skin, stomach, limb, knee, and foot.28 Many other instances of functional shift can readily be

28 Otto Jespersen, Growth and Structure of the English Language, p. 167. (Italics omitted.)
found in English. The sentence, "But me no buts," neatly exemplifies the process: a new verb, "but," and a new noun, "but(s)," have been added to English.

Words like "quisling," "mackintosh," "raglan," "guy," "boycott," and "sandwich" illustrate another method by which words are added to the language; they are all derived from proper names. It is estimated that over five hundred common words in English have originated from proper names.29 The etymological investigation of such words is all the more fascinating because it combines the history of words with the lives of historical figures.

Blending and acronyms are the final types of making new words in English under the general method of adaptation. In blending, the new word combines the sounds of two old ones: "flaunt is almost certainly the amalgamation of flout and vaunt, slide of slip and glide, and twirl of twist and whirl."30 Acronyms are words composed of the initial letters of syllables of phrases. "NATO" and "UNESCO" are two of the many such words that have come into the language in recent years.

Authors' Contributions

Many words of the English language owe their origins to the ingenuity of individual writers and speakers. Though the words themselves are either new root creations or adaptations of existing roots,

29Baugh, op. cit., p. 369

30Robertson and Cassidy, op. cit., p. 213.
the two general methods of word-formation discussed above, it seems fitting to credit specific authors with their inventions whenever sufficient evidence is to be found. And for this purpose, the New English Dictionary is a treasure house of information, for it presents a quotation illustrating the earliest known meaning of each word in the English language. It is this historically based dictionary that encouraged the study of the individual's role in vocabulary making. 31 

Men like Chaucer, Wyclif, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Keats, among many others, altered the English language to some extent. Though he is often called the creator of English, Chaucer in fact affected the developing English language only in a minor way: "He not only did not invent or alter the grammatical inflections, but he also appears to have added few words to the English vocabulary." 32 His main contribution, of course, was the prestige that his poetical works added to English. Chaucer and his contemporary, John Wyclif, did standardize certain expressions in English; Wyclif's borrowings were mainly from the Latin of the Vulgate Bible, while Chaucer's were from French. 33 Spenser, like the translators of the King James version of the Bible of 1611, is responsible for preserving many archaisms of the day that might otherwise have disappeared from the language.

31Ibid., p. 215.


33Robertson and Cassidy, op. cit., p. 217.
Unquestionably the supreme individual word-maker in the English language is Shakespeare. To indicate Shakespeare's facility at creating words, one source cites these comparisons from the scholarly research of L. P. Smith in English Language and Ernest Weekley in his English Language: "Smith remarks that there are more new words in the plays 'than in almost all the rest of the English poets put together,' and Weekley that 'his contribution to our phraseology is ten times greater than that of any writer to any language in the history of the world.'" In substantiation of the latter claim, the following phrases from the third act of Hamlet may be cited: "to be, or not to be," "that flesh is heir to," "consummation devoutly to be wished," "there's the rub," "this mortal coil," "the law's delay," "the undiscovered country," "the native hue of resolution," "the glass of fashion," "the observed of all observers," "trippingly on the tongue," "tear a passion to tatters," "it out-Herods Herod," "to hold ... the mirror up to nature," "make the judicious grieve," "metal more attractive," "miching mallecho," "the lady doth protest too much," "as easy as lying," "pluck out the heart of my mystery," "very like a whale," "fool me to the top of my bent," "the very witching time of night," "it smells to heaven," "the primal eldest curse," "no relish of salvation," "a king of shreds and patches," and "hoist with his own petard." 

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34 Ibid., p. 219.

It may be difficult to trace with certainty the origin of a word to a distant author; but a group of words or a phrase presents no such problem. Well-known phrases from Milton include "light fantastic toe," "dim religious light," "writ large," "they also serve," "His (God's) Englishmen," "not without dust and heat," "darkness visible," "human face divine," "fallen on evil days," and "confusion worse confounded." From Keats come, in the last four lines of the seventh stanza of the Ode to a Nightingale, "alien corn," "magic casements," "perilous seas," and "fairy lands forlorn." 36

Many prose writers, as well as poets, are responsible for the introduction of new words into the English language. The forcefulness of the poetic line seems to foster the transmission of the full impact of the poet's phraseology. Writers of prose seem to be mainly successful in creating individual words, rather than word-groups, for adoption into the common wordstock. Among the most notable coiners of words in English are Sir Thomas More, John Lyly, Robert Greene, Sir Thomas Browne, Samuel Johnson, Edmund Burke, Jeremy Bentham, Sir Walter Scott, and Thomas Carlyle. 37

The words that comprise the vocabulary of a living language, of course, are never static. Some words assume narrower meanings; others, wider. Some words pass from standard use into slang; others, from slang into standard. The coinage of a new term merely signals


37Ibid., pp. 222-26.
the beginning of that word's subsequent history. How people react to the words they hear and read makes a study at least as important as the development of the vocabulary itself. Some investigation of the principles of semantics would therefore undoubtedly further enrich the English program of the secondary school.

Words frequently have emotional implications that affect people more profoundly than do the lexical meanings of those words. Diners frequently order "steak" who would hesitate to elect a menu item labeled "piece of dead steer." Control of the meanings of words in a lexicon is therefore not enough; one needs also to have some awareness of the predictable effects that many words will have upon the reader or listener. Access to organized information about this vital area of linguistic life is available to teachers of English in the voluminous productions of the semanticists.

Though semantics can broadly be defined as the study of meaning, there are at least three different types of semantic exploration possible, depending on the view of "meaning" to be taken. "Meaning" can be interpreted notionally, referentially, or distributionally.38 Notional meaning involves philosophical speculation into the ideas that the mind associates with words. In the study of referential meaning, the investigator seeks to discover the relationship of words and the things to which they refer. The meaning of a word, distributionally is "all the positions it fills in the system of the language

of which it is a part. The first of these types of semantic study belongs more properly to the province of philosophy, while the third has hardly produced any results as yet, remaining more a theoretical possibility than a working science. It is the second type of semantics, that which investigates referential meaning and to which the so-called general semanticists address themselves, that has enjoyed a spectacular growth in popularity in the last thirty years.

A description of the relationship between thoughts, words, and things that is of seminal importance in the development of semantics appeared in Ogden and Richards' *The Meaning of Meaning* in 1923. The authors placed the three factors -- thought or reference, symbol, and referent -- that are necessarily involved whenever any statement is made at the corners of a triangle; the relations which existed between them were defined by the sides of the triangle: causal relations between the thought and the symbol and between the thought and the referent, but only an imputed relation between the symbol and the referent, the symbol merely standing for the referent. Though the latter relationship seems quite obvious, its importance cannot be overemphasized:

It may appear unnecessary to insist that there is no direct connection between say 'dog' the word, and certain common objects in our streets, and that the only connection which holds is that which consists in our

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using the word when we refer to the animal. We shall find, however, that the kind of simplification typified by this once universal theory of direct meaning relations between words and things is the source of almost all the difficulties which thought encounters.\textsuperscript{41}

There are unreflective people, however, who react to labels rather than to the objects for which those labels stand. It is indeed this dangerous habit that many general semanticists believe to be responsible for creating a delusional world in the minds of some people.

One needs to know vastly more about the thing labeled "dog" than the convenient fact that it can be so labeled. Hayakawa has observed that a "tension is exhibited by many people confronted by an unnamed object -- a tension that usually disappears when a name has been given."\textsuperscript{42} He cites a personal anecdote in support of this judgment:

\begin{quote}
A trivial but revealing instance of this adjustment to names occurred in my own home recently, where I have hanging an abstract painting by the late L. Moholy-Nagy. A woman who was visiting us couldn't keep her mind on the conversation; she kept turning to stare at the painting. Apparently it was disturbing her a great deal. Finally, she walked up to it, found a tiny type-written label on the frame saying, "Space Modulator, 1911." "Space modulator, is it?" she said. "Isn't that nice!" She sat down, much relieved. She never even glanced at it again after that.\textsuperscript{43}
\end{quote}

Words are significant carriers of meaning, and their being listed in dictionaries as independent units emphasizes their importance. They

\textsuperscript{41}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{43}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 221-22.
appear to be entities that have an existence even outside the human
mind that creates and sustains them. Though words have no power but
that delegated them by man, the power so transmitted is great.
Primitive tribes have believed not only in the power but in the magic
of words. Many words are banned from polite usage for various
reasons; others are reserved for special rituals. The belief that
the naming of an item somehow results in a control of it is not
restricted in time or place. To help overcome this unscientific
attitude toward words and their relation to thoughts and things, the
semantic triangle of Ogden and Richards is a valuable remedy.

Another important contribution of Ogden and Richards is their
pioneering work in the theory of definition. For accurate defini-
tion of terms, basically the identification of referents, is the
bridge to understanding between speaker and listener. To reach the
goal of accurate definition, according to Ogden and Richards, one
must have a starting-point and some usable routes. Starting-points
are important because they "act as signs by which the required refer-
ents may be reached." Whatever people are directly familiar with
qualifies as a starting-point. The routes traversing the field of
reference, however, are many. The following ones, with excerpts
from the authors' explanatory material, are the main routes:

1. Symbolization
    "'Orange' is a symbol which stands for This."

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Ogden and Richards, op. cit., p. 115.
2. Similarity

"To anything which is like this thing in respect of colour the symbol 'orange' is applicable."

3. Spatial Relations

"'Orange' is a symbol for the colour of the region between red and yellow in a spectrum (and of any colour like this)."

4. Temporal Relations

'Yesterday' is the day before to-day.

5. Causation: Physical

'Thunder' is what is caused (not by two clouds bumping but) by certain electrical disturbances.

6. Causation: Psychological

'The Unconscious' is what causes dreams, fugues, psychoses, humour and the rest.

7. Causation: Psycho-physical

... we may define 'A perception of orange' as 'the effect in consciousness of certain vibrations falling on the retina.'

8. Being the Object of a Mental State

'Piteous things' may be defined as those towards which we feel pity.

9. Common Complex Relations

Some definitions are most conveniently formulated in complex form. ... Examples are 'utility' (analysable into Nos. 7 and 8), 'Imitation' (2 and 7), 'Implication' (1 and 8).

10. Legal Relations

Examples: 'Belonging to' (when 'owned by'), 'Subject of,' 'Liable to,' 'Evidence of.' All legal definitions are highly complex, though none the less serviceable.45

This classification of relations between referents is admittedly only a partial one; it is justified mainly because it encompasses the most commonly used methods of definition.46

46Ibid., p. 120.
The system of classification developed by Ogden and Richards is a highly useful one, for words too often conceal the things they stand for. Focusing attention on the relations of the referents, the things behind the words, Ogden and Richards succeed in clarifying the subject matter of semantics. The meanings of words lie not in the symbols themselves nor even in the relation of the symbols to their referents. Meanings are to be found only where there is a mind to give thought to the thing for which the symbol stands. Hayakawa is thus able to point out that "a language is therefore not merely the system of signs but also the whole repertory of semantic reactions which the signs produce in those who speak and understand the language."47

The mission of the general semanticists becomes then the re-education of people to a new orientation toward language. People must be made aware that the structure of the world is not adequately represented by the structure of the language popularly used to describe it. The source of this inadequacy of language is traceable, according to the general semanticists, to the logical modes of thinking originated by Aristotle and adopted in the Western civilization he so greatly influenced. The prime expounder of the thesis that Aristotle's approach to reality is injurious is Alfred Korzybski, who launched the general-semantics movement with the

47Hayakawa, op. cit., p. 218.
publication of his *Science and Sanity, an Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics* in 1933. S. I. Hayakawa and Irving J. Lee are probably the most successful popularizers of the principles first formulated by Korzybski. The former's *Language in Action*, for example, became a best seller soon after its issuance in 1941.

Korzybski developed his discipline of general semantics to train people to make their evaluations of events, words, and symbols as rigorously as scientists make theirs.⁴⁸ Modern science, whose technological progress was becoming increasingly rapid, had developed and was governed by new assumptions about the relation of language to reality. According to Hayakawa, the most highly original formulations of Korzybski are three: "(1) a map is not the territory (words are not the things they represent); (2) a map does not represent all of a territory (words cannot say all about anything); (3) a map is self-reflexive, in the sense that an ideal map would have to include a map of the map."⁴⁹ Adherence to these rules would enable people not only to make better judgments but to maintain a sane outlook on life.

An unfortunate burden that has to be borne by the followers of Korzybski is the fact that he apparently gave only a casual reading


⁴⁹Ibid., p. 27.
to the positions of the various schools of thought that he attacks. His principle of non-identity, for example, has been motivated from a reaction to Aristotle's use of the verb "is" as identity. Professor Max Black notes that Korzybski does not quote from Aristotle in making this accusation, and he shows why Aristotle could not in fact be charged with this fault: "Now it is, of course, a central part of the doctrine of Aristotelian logic that the proposition All A is B cannot be automatically replaced by the converse, All B is A."\(^50\) Obviously Aristotle would not use "is" to identify "B" with "A"; equally obvious, Korzybski has never familiarized himself with Aristotle's position. Another criticism of Korzybski's careless statements is candidly made by an admirer of general semanticism: "He makes a critique of the foundations of mathematics which has not impressed many mathematicians. He speaks with assurance about the power of the physico-mathematical method in science, but his work does not contain any mathematical derivations."\(^51\)

Despite these admitted weaknesses in the work of the founder of general semantics, the movement itself has generated considerable fervor among its practitioners, who see themselves in the role of teachers rather than investigators of a new discipline. What they contribute as teachers is of undoubted value, for those familiar

\(^{50}\)Max Black, *Language and Philosophy*, p. 230.

with the principles of general semantics become better equipped to deal with the things words stand for. Developing a proper attitude toward reality is an important aim of the general-semantics movement. According to a former president of the International Society for General Semantics, Francis P. Chisholm, its purpose, in fact, "implies the task of training the nervous systems of as many people as possible to act in terms of the order empirically known to be healthy."52

Often the task of the general semanticist is the retraining of people to eradicate the delusional worlds that they have created by confusing labels for things:

It happens, however, that as the result of miseducation, bad training, frightening experiences in childhood, obsolete traditional beliefs, propaganda, and other influences in our lives, all of us have what might be termed "areas of insanity" or, perhaps better, "areas of infantilism." There are certain subjects about which we can never, as we say, "think straight," because we are "blinded by prejudice." Some people, for example, as the result of a childhood experience, cannot help being frightened by the mere sight of a policeman -- any policeman; the terrifying "policeman" inside their heads "is" the extensional policeman outside, who probably has no designs that anyone could regard as terrifying.53

The remedy for this unhealthy attitude toward the world is a thorough understanding of the Ogden-Richards semantic triangle, which clearly shows that though the word stands for the referent, the two are not causally related. Korzybski's ladder-of-abstraction concept is


another useful cure, for it helps focus attention on the process of abstraction. According to this idea, one begins, for example, with the cow known to science; then to the object of experience; next to the word "Bessie"; progressively then to "cow"; "bovine"; "quadruped"; "animal"; "organism"; etc. At each rung of the ladder, additional characteristics are omitted; with each omission, the abstraction becomes more general and potentially less communicative. The term "organism," for example, applies to many more classes of animals than does the lower-order abstraction, "cow." Writers and speakers need always to be conscious of the referents in the real world for which their words stand.

Not only do words stand for, or denote, things, however; they also have the power to suggest, or connote, other ideas conjured up by the very sounds and appearances of the terms themselves.

How important is it to distinguish denotation from connotation? Professor Altick declares:

Nothing is more essential to the process of intelligent, truly profitable reading than a sensitivity to connotation. Only when we possess such sensitivity can we understand not only what the author means, which may be pretty obvious, but also what he wants to suggest, which may actually be far more important than the superficial meaning. The difference between reading a book or essay or story or poem for gross meaning and reading it for implication is the difference between listening to the New York Philharmonic Orchestra on a 1923 crystal set and listening to it on a latest-model FM radio.55

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54 Ibid., p. 96.

An obvious meaning, actually, may at times not be the intended one, as the many examples of satire and irony in literature (or even ordinary writing and speaking) would attest. The angry letter to the editor of almost any newspaper today often buttresses its message with an allusion to the "democratic" or "American" way of life, relying on the favorable impressions such words make on the uncritical reading public. In some other parts of the world, a description of a way of life as "American" may arouse visions of such opposite ideas as exploitation of the working classes and discrimination against minority groups. "Democratic" here may mean what Americans intend by the term "dictatorial."

Emotive language has proved to be a useful device for writers of world propaganda, political speeches, advertisements in all the mass media of communication, essays, poetry, and fiction. The use of words designed to arouse a predetermined response is not always an honest or artistic one. A reader unable to distinguish between a legitimate use of emotive language and a deceitful one is doubly damned: He is at the mercy of knaves, and he cannot appreciate the sensitive language of the literary artist.

Emotive language is useful for such widely ranging legitimate purposes as arousing the sympathy of citizens to contribute funds to various charitable organizations and evoking their patriotic spirit, especially in times of crisis, so that they buy government bonds and refuse to hoard scarce commodities. The novelist, the poet, and the playwright, moreover, may use emotive language to
bring about an empathic response in their readers; a successful writer often makes his readers share the emotions of his fictional creations. Of course emotive language can be used to effect responses for deceitful purposes, too. The skillful presentations made by some representatives at the United Nations, for example, often win the pity of many kind-hearted people for victims of alleged injustices which actually have not occurred. Advertisers are often more interested in copy that creates a pleasant feeling toward their product than discusses the product's merits.

American public schools have traditionally sought to equip their graduates with the intellectual accouterments deemed necessary for the subsequent struggle in real life situations. To do battle against the delusional worlds created by unscientific uses of language, pupils would need to know how to form sound attitudes toward the behavior of language. They need a thorough exposure, then, to the principles of semantics.
CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION

The temper of the American public today reflects the added seriousness that alarm and concern over national survival periodically bring. Though no previous crisis ever appears so intense as a present one, awesome technological advances in weaponry have dramatized to many people the need for improving the nation's ability to cope with the many problems it faces. These problems are not exclusively scientific; they are also economic and diplomatic. Automation in industry threatens to displace the unskilled worker, while the barrage of propaganda in world forums challenges the intellectual abilities of those who seek to distinguish fact from fancy.

One result of the increasing complexity of the individual's relationship to the various forces that affect his well-being is a renewed interest in the role of the American public school system. Schools are being recognized as important training grounds for the production of talented defenders of the state as well as of graduates whose capacities for personal betterment have been maximally developed. Efforts to improve the quality of instruction are discernible in the teaching of virtually all the subjects offered in the secondary school; science, mathematics, and foreign languages have been the favored recipients of federal grants. It is recognized that teachers of these disciplines need to be brought up to date in their
own comprehension of their subject matter, the body of knowledge in science and mathematics, for example, having expanded explosively in recent years.

The seriousness that pervades the atmosphere of public school instruction has proved to be a wholesome climate for the nurturing and growth of a new attitude toward the study of the language. The voluminous scholarship on the development and the structure of the English language has begun to affect the secondary-school English curriculum. Linguistics, the scientific study of language, is gradually coming to be recognized as a powerful tool for upgrading language study in English classes. Linguistic scholars and specialists in the teaching of English are both exploring the educational implications of the new discipline for the various aspects of classroom instruction in English. The use of linguistics seems especially relevant for the teaching of parts of speech, written composition, usage, vocabulary development, and semantics.

### Parts of Speech

The conventional treatment of parts of speech in the high-school English class has long been based on a system of classification originally produced by the ancient Greek and Roman grammarians. The highly inflected Greek and Latin languages are somewhat related to the generally analytic English language, since they are all members of the Indo-European family of languages. This relationship, however, does not obviate the necessity of studying the unique structure
of each language independently. Transferring generalizations about the structure of one language to that of another is a practice always to be distrusted; linguists studying exotic languages have been especially wary of inferring the existence or even the possibility of universal ways of saying things. Unfortunately, the writers of handbooks and grammars of English in the eighteenth century were markedly unsophisticated in their linguistic backgrounds. Latin grammar was thought to be a perfect system of rules on which an English grammar might be based. The parts of speech described in the Latin grammar were carried over into the grammars purportedly describing the English language. Most of the secondary-school textbooks on the English language preserve today this heritage of classifying parts of speech.

Modern scientific grammarians are putting forth new systems and methods of classifying the actual English language that is spoken today. Their approach to the problem of classifying the parts of speech is an inductive one which carefully examines data from the living, spoken language. Their results are a radical departure from the conventional classifications taught in most secondary schools. In Charles C. Fries' system, for example, there are four parts of speech recognized instead of the traditional eight. To avoid confusion with the familiar labels, Fries designates his four categories simply as Class 1, Class 2, Class 3, and Class 4 words. The classes, or parts of speech, are identified by their ability to fit different frames, or sentence patterns. Parts of
speech under the Fries system are seen to be positionally derived and thus easily identifiable. Another linguist, James Sledd, suggests that two sets of parts of speech be used. One set of parts of speech -- noun, pronoun, verb, adjective, and adverb -- is identified according to the inflectional ending, or suffix, of each word. The other set of parts of speech -- nominal, verbal, adjectival, and adverbial -- is identified by position, much as in the Fries system. Unlike Fries, however, Sledd makes considerable use of the features of pitch, stress, and juncture. A final representative classification of parts of speech according to modern linguists is that of W. Nelson Francis. He identifies five signals of syntactic structure -- word order, prosody, function words, inflections, and derivational contrast -- and uses them to identify the four parts of speech: nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.

**Written Composition**

Though many approaches to the teaching of written composition have been used by teachers of secondary-school English, previous research tended to show that at least one route might better be abandoned, namely, the teaching of formal grammar as a means of improving written composition.\(^5\)\(^6\) It seemed logical to avoid the study of a body of rules that had no measurable effects upon the

speaking and writing habits of pupils. Though the linguist does not criticize the logic of such a position, he does make an important distinction:

When it was shown that a knowledge of traditional grammar had little correlation with an ability to use English correctly and effectively, the result was a belief that grammar need not be studied as a prerequisite to training in composition. This view, is, I think, wrong. I think that, on the contrary, an adequate knowledge of the forms of English and of the rules for their use should be a very valuable prerequisite to instruction in composition. Arguments based on current experience are irrelevant, for the grammar has not been English grammar.57

Where the grammar used is a scientific one that is uniquely English, pupils even in the eighth grade are apparently enabled to use more mature forms of writing in expressing themselves.58

The new grammars being developed by scientific linguists make possible the serious study of the actual structures that make up the English way of saying things. There are at present two distinct models of English grammar that have been developed by the linguists. The more widely used model is the immediate-constituent analysis that has evolved from the investigations of such men as Bloomfield, Fries, Roberts, Sledd, and Francis. A newer model, potentially more powerful since it attempts to formulate grammatical rules that generate all English sentences and no non-sentences is


transformational grammar. Its outstanding exponent is Noam Chomsky.

A primary discovery made by linguists in immediate-constituent analysis was the remarkably limited number of different syntactic units needed to convey an infinite number of meanings in English. These syntactic units, basically composed of two constituent parts are four in number: structures of modification, structures of predication, structures of complementation, and structures of coordination. Every possible English construction can be analyzed into one or more of the four basic structures. A mastery of the way these structures are formed and how they can be combined, conversely, makes it possible for pupils to draw on more of the resources of their native language in their writing and speaking. The accurate descriptions of English syntax afforded by these structures provide a strong base on which a sound composition program can be erected.

Transformational grammar, the new horizon of linguistic science, sees immediate-constituent analysis as adequate for only a small part of the language. A grammar based on the immediate-constituent theory would be too "complex, ad hoc, and 'unrevealing.'" Transformational rules would simplify the explanation of English syntax, according to Chomsky. The most powerful model of English grammar, according to the transformational grammarians, would result from

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60Noam Chomsky, Syntactic Structures, p. 34.
the application of a set of transformational rules to a kernel
grammar derived by the immediate-constituent technique.

Usage

Linguistic science has much to suggest regarding the attitude
that people ought to develop toward so important a daily activity
of theirs as language. The notion that some forms of expression are
"correct" and others "incorrect" is thoroughly ingrained in the
minds of many. Partly at fault is the variety of ways in which the
term "usage" is employed:

...language is the actual linguistic behavior of
native speakers, which is all that is meant by usage.
Nevertheless, the old notion persists -- in some quar-
ters as strongly as it ever did in the eighteenth
century -- that there is some other source and sanction
for language, and that the linguistic behavior of the
great majority of native speakers is in some way de-
generate and corrupt.\textsuperscript{61}

Linguistic patterns used by native speakers -- educated, cultivated,
or neither -- are either meaningful utterances or not meaningful
utterances. Considerations of their "correctness" are irrelevant
in language use and study. In the secondary schools, however, the
prestige dialect -- the language of the educated -- is expected to
be taught. It does become pedagogically important, therefore, to
consider the "correctness" or "appropriateness" of locutions for
particular levels of usage.

But recognition that the actual usage of native speakers of
English should provide the basis for the formulation of grammatical

\textsuperscript{61}Francis, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 567.
rules and classifications has been only grudgingly, and gradually, accepted by the writers of the conventional textbooks used in many of the secondary schools. Grammatical judgments appearing in such textbooks often are directly traceable to the prescriptive pronouncements made by the authoritarian handbook-writers of the Bishop Lowth and Lindley Murray type of the eighteenth century. Linguists perform a necessary public service when they point out that the business of a grammarian is to classify and organize the ways a language is used and not to direct users of a language to speak in the way he thinks proper. The idea of an unchanging, absolute standard of speech is at variance with the attitude of modern linguists toward language: "Linguistic analysis of the various levels of standard and colloquial speech, with their changes in the course of time, shows that 'correctness' is a relativistic concept. A given form is 'correct' for a given variety of speech in a given historical period."62 The prescriptive judgments of the eighteenth-century grammarians, still being transmitted in various textbooks on the secondary level, need to be replaced with the careful assessments of actual usage being made by scientific linguists.

Vocabulary Development

At present, American secondary schools make little use of the voluminous contributions to scholarship available in the field of historical linguistics. Yet a systematic exposure to the ways in

which the English lexicon developed would provide pupils with another means of increasing their personal vocabularies, and it would further enhance their prospects of using words with the precision that marks the educated man. If, as the poet avers, the proper study of mankind is man, then no study is more humanistic than that of the language which distinguishes him from other animals. And ignoring the history of one's language may cause the needless repetition of previous errors. A knowledge of linguistic history is perhaps the surest antidote for the twin poisons of provincialism and prejudice in language study.

Though some linguistic historians emphasize the importance of the difference between native and borrowed words in English, high-school pupils probably ought not be concerned with this controversy. They might better be involved in a study of the ways in which new words are added to the English wordstock. They might investigate Robertson and Cassidy's list of word-formation techniques:

1. New Creations
2. Echoism
3. Gradation
4. Compounding
5. Derivation
6. Back-Formation
7. Shortening
8. Conversion
9. Words from Names
10. Blending
11. Acronyms
12. Authors' Contributions

Robertson and Cassidy, op. cit., pp. 185-231.
As pupils learn the histories of individual words, they may come to appreciate the dynamic character of a living language.

Semantics

Along with the development of their vocabularies, pupils in secondary schools need also to know how people react to the words they see and hear. Materials dealing with this important phase of language activity comprise the subject matter of semantics. Some knowledge of the principles of semantics can help pupils to predict the effects their words will have on their audience. Furthermore, such knowledge will enable them to analyze messages of various sorts that others direct to them.

The Ogden and Richards' semantic triangle, which describes the relationship between thought, symbol, and referent, would provide pupils with a helpful technique for separating labels from the things for which the labels stand. (It is less likely that any delusional worlds would plague the semantically trained.) A second valuable technique, developed by Alfred Korzybski, the founder of the general-semantics movement, is the ladder-of-abstraction concept. It is this concept which points up the dangers of faulty communication inherent in the use of terms distantly removed from the referents in the objective world for which they stand.

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 Ogden and Richards, op. cit., p. 11.
Though the identification of referents is a valuable asset to clear communication, words do not merely identify the things for which they stand. Words have also a suggestive power. And since emotive language has proved so useful an instrument in the hands of different writers, pupils need to develop an awareness that words have both denotations and connotations. A sensitivity to the connotative power of words would enable them more readily to distinguish between legitimate and deceitful uses of emotive language.


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