INFORMATION TO USERS

This reproduction was made from a copy of a document sent to us for microfilming. While the most advanced technology has been used to photograph and reproduce this document, the quality of the reproduction is heavily dependent upon the quality of the material submitted.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help clarify markings or notations which may appear on this reproduction.

1. The sign or “target” for pages apparently lacking from the document photographed is “Missing Page(s)”. If it was possible to obtain the missing page(s) or section, they are spliced into the film along with adjacent pages. This may have necessitated cutting through an image and duplicating adjacent pages to assure complete continuity.

2. When an image on the film is obliterated with a round black mark, it is an indication of either blurred copy because of movement during exposure, duplicate copy, or copyrighted materials that should not have been filmed. For blurred pages, a good image of the page can be found in the adjacent frame. If copyrighted materials were deleted, a target note will appear listing the pages in the adjacent frame.

3. When a map, drawing or chart, etc., is part of the material being photographed, a definite method of “sectioning” the material has been followed. It is customary to begin filming at the upper left hand corner of a large sheet and to continue from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. If necessary, sectioning is continued again—beginning below the first row and continuing on until complete.

4. For illustrations that cannot be satisfactorily reproduced by xerographic means, photographic prints can be purchased at additional cost and inserted into your xerographic copy. These prints are available upon request from the Dissertations Customer Services Department.

5. Some pages in any document may have indistinct print. In all cases the best available copy has been filmed.

ORAL AND TEXTUAL COMPOSING PATTERNS
OF BEGINNING WRITERS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
Nancy Potter Woodson, B.A., M.Ed.

******

The Ohio State University
1985

Reading Committee:
Dr. Donald Bateman
Dr. Frank O'Hare
Dr. David Frantz

Approved By
Dr. Donald Bateman
Department of Educational Theory and Practice
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My acknowledgments are gratefully offered to the many friends who supported me during my studies and the writing of this dissertation. There are three persons who should be singled out, however, since they were most instrumental in guiding and sustaining me throughout.

My husband, Thomas Woodson, encouraged and supported me in countless ways. His helpful suggestions and criticisms of this dissertation allowed me to believe from the outset that it could be completed. His caring and patience made my work possible and inspired confidence.

My late father, Frederick Potter, whose final thoughts were for my studies rather than himself, will be a constant reminder of love and courage. His example of personal dignity allowed me the determination to continue my work.

Professor Donald Bateman, my advisor, reminded me many times of what it means to be a truly fine teacher: to create space for the individual's idea to grow; to contribute help when it is needed; and, finally, to share graciously in the delight of the accomplished task. During my years as his student, Professor Bateman showed concern and kindness on every occasion.

No project is ever completed in isolation. My sources of support were constant and generously given; this dissertation would not have been possible without them.
VITA

January 27, 1935 ................... Born-North Adams, Massachusetts

1957 ................................ B.A., University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan


1965-1968 .......................... Lecturer, English Department, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

1971-1974 .......................... Lecturer/Instructor, Division of Comparative Studies, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio


1977-1985 ......................... Lecturer/Instructor, The Writing Workshop, English Department, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

PUBLICATIONS


FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: English Education

Studies in Composition. Professor Susan Helgeson

Studies in Psycholinguistics. Professor Donald Bateman
# Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ......................................... ii  
VITA ................................................................ iii  
LIST OF TABLES .................................................... vi  
PREFACE ................................................................ vii  

## Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION ............................................... 1  
II. THE PATTERN BENEATH THE PATTERN ................. 48  
III. MONOLOGIC AND DIALOGIC LANGUAGE ............... 103  
IV. THE PILOT PROJECT ........................................ 144  

A Study of Dialogic and Monologic Prompts  
and Writing Strategies ........................................ 144  
Part A: Goals of the Study ...................................... 158  
Part B: Design of the Study ...................................... 159  
The Construct of the Essay Prompts  
Results of the Pilot Project ..................................... 167  

V. IMPLICATION OF THE PILOT STUDY ..................... 195  

## Appendixes

A. English Theme Topics: Directions .......................... 206  
B. Resolved Essay Prompts ...................................... 208  
C. Pilot Project Prompts .......................................... 210  
D. Student Essay Placement Chart ............................. 212  

BIBLIOGRAPHY ......................................................... 214
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The term "basic" has been applied to a group of writers who exhibit skills at considerably lower levels than those of standard or "nonremedial" writers. When Mina Shaughnessy first categorized basic writers as a group in her book, *Errors and Expectations*, in 1977, new theories emerged concerning these writers. These were the students who were inexperienced with composing skills and paralyzed by the fear of creating errors within a written text. Teachers searched the writing patterns of these students and the logic behind their errors to create a working pedagogy for these language-users.

Much of the emerging pedagogy I found useful in my seven years of teaching basic writers in The Writing Workshop at The Ohio State University. The desire to further investigate specific writing patterns and composing strategies of basic writers was the impetus for this dissertation.

The primary focus of this dissertation is my definition of basic writers as those who combine both oral and textual composing strategies within their written work. By investigating the traits of both oral and textual cultures and linking these traits to monologic and dialogic language, I hope to provide a new insight into the writing patterns of basic writers.
To evaluate other possible determinants which might influence the composing styles of basic writers, it was first necessary to consider additional studies based on this group which offered other explanations for their writing patterns. Chapter I of my dissertation discusses the work of Basil Bernstein, Richard Ohmann, and Walter Loban—all of whom equate, to some degree, language and social-class structure.

While my own theories regarding basic writers are not in accord with those researchers who equate social class and language, their descriptions of the writers they studied—very similar to Shaughnessy’s—permitted my study of basic writers as a group which shared common characteristics.

Building on these common descriptions, I introduce in Chapter II my definition of basic writers as those who use both oral and textual traits in composing patterns. Central to my argument is Alexander Luria’s theory that "beginning" writers' written language shows characteristics of oral speech, but also includes consciously learned writing techniques. Luria’s description provides the connection necessary to evaluate these writers as those who are actually suspended between oral and textual cultures, exhibiting features of each. I explore orality and textuality further in Chapter II using student writing samples that exhibit characteristics of both cultures.

Chapter III uses these same characteristics to make contextual connections between oral traits and dialogic language, on the one hand, and textual traits and monologic language, on the other. This connection
is a vital one because it establishes the argument that beginning writers show an inability to produce monologic language; but, they do rely on oral strengths to create dialogic and conversational language within their written work. Tying oral speaking and writing together indicates a reinforcement of the language patterns produced by beginning writers. The pedagogical implications indicate that teachers should build on the oral dialogic strengths of these writers and slowly introduce the intricacies of monologic language when students are ready to incorporate them into their existing composing strategies.

Chapter III discusses the pedagogy of three teachers who have based their programs on the dialogic theory. While Britton and Moffett have promoted student-centered programs, Paulo Freire, Ira Shor, and Nan Elsasser have used the techniques of dialogue as the core of their teaching methods. Elsasser has also made the important connection between the methods of Freire and the language theories of Vygotsky; in so doing, she has linked the process of inner speech, the language of internal thought, with written speech, the language of shared thought.

At this point in my dissertation, a possible procedure might have been to present my own pedagogy based on the implications of the composing techniques of beginning writers. However, I considered this alternative to be less important than the direction I eventually pursued. Chapter IV discusses the relationship between essay prompts and the resultant writing responses. While my initial motives were to evaluate monologic and dialogic language in a testing situation, I was also aware of the intense focus on holistic writing and grading taking place in
public school systems, colleges, and universities. Since so many students and teachers at all levels were involved in this particular type of writing, it seemed pertinent to investigate dialogic and monologic writing prompts and their influences on the written performances of respondents.

My Pilot Project, described in Chapter IV, discusses the written responses of fifty beginning writers who selected dialogic or monologic prompts in a Writing Workshop Placement Examination. While the Pilot Study is not intended as a statistical one with far-reaching implications, the student writings which are examined do show that a significant number of low-level beginning writers achieved higher placement standings when they selected a mode familiar to them, dialogic. Conversely, the lowest-level beginning writers performed least effectively when they responded to the monologic prompt. The sample writing of students who placed either significantly higher or lower in this Pilot Project are discussed in Chapter IV to examine the respective ways in which oral and textual writing strategies are exhibited within the written texts.

Chapter V examines the implications of the Pilot Project which suggest that beginning writers work most effectively by employing the strengths of the dialogic strategies they already possess and by gradually accumulating monologic strategies they need for effective communication. The Pilot Project also demonstrates that the structure of an essay prompt, whether in testing or assignment situations, will have a strong influence on the actual writing students produce.
Perhaps the most important future possibility to emerge from this dissertation is the creation of a curriculum which would incorporate writing techniques necessary to reach the rich oral cultures of beginning writers and to open opportunities for them to express their experiences for an appreciative and comprehending audience.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The problem of teaching composition to basic writers is not a new one. Teachers at all levels of instruction encounter students who just "can't quite keep up with the rest of their classmates." Often, these students are diagnosed as weak readers, poor spellers, or, in general, those who just can't apply language rules to their writing. These are the students who come to find any writing a chore, and it is often writing skills which are responsible for their failures at the college level.

For the most part, researchers have focused on identification of these writers rather than on the causes and conditions of their poor skills. These identification practices have allowed educators to develop pedagogical techniques without fully examining the underlying patterns and problems of the basic writers; thus, for the most part, these patterns remain complex and unidentified.

Some of the earliest studies of the "remedial" language users linked their language patterns to their class backgrounds. Although cognitive development was referred to as a contributing factor, it was actually the sociological background which was seen as the primary influence on their writing. One of the most prominent sociolinguists to study basic language-users was Basil Bernstein, a noted British researcher schooled in both education and the sciences. In his book, *Class, Codes and Control*,
Volume I published in 1971, Bernstein attempted to show how sociolinguistic codes were generated, used, and changed as a result of individuals interacting with society, particularly within family groups and in school situations. Working with small groups of middle class and working class children, he matched the groups for age, sex, and ability and discovered that there was a high level of frequency in the patterns of speech of each group. Bernstein's explanation for this occurrence is that language meanings are either context-dependent, available only to those speakers who share the code; or, context-independent, universal and thus available to all users. The continuation of his theory resulted in linking the context-dependent code to "restricted" code-users and the context-independent code to "elaborated" code-users. Context-dependent language is particularistic; it relies on shared, understood meanings of the group using it. The principles of the restricted, context-dependent code are easily understood and simply manipulated. On the other hand, the elaborated, or context-independent code does not rely on shared meanings; the code uses language which is universal and principles which are verbally explicit and elaborated. In examining how the two codes are related to specific classes, Bernstein claims he does not wish to influence pedagogy; rather, he intends to "... indicate a relationship between the mode of cognitive expression and certain social classes." Throughout his work he stresses that he measures only a part of the existing cognitive abilities of the middle and working classes, not their untapped "cognitive potential;" however, he implies that unskilled or working classes have a negative perception of learning and lack an awareness of the importance between means and ends. In contrast, the middle class
relates education to the direct emotional and physical experiences of children as they grow; this allows for growth in an organized structure whereby education and the verbalization of feelings are well rewarded. It would seem that "potential" is inhibited early on for working-class children simply because of familial attitudes and methods of socialization:

Language exists in relation to a desire to express and communicate; consequently, the mode of a language structure—the way in which words and sentences are related—reflects a particular form of the structuring of feeling and so the very means of interaction and response to the environment.²

Bernstein makes the additional point that the middle-class child can comprehend and interact with both restricted and elaborated codes; however, the working-class child is primarily limited to the restricted code because he/she has to mediate the middle-class elaborated code through his/her own code to make it personally meaningful. If the language does not translate readily, then the child fails to comprehend meanings.

Family structures play a vital role in Bernstein's study. The positive fostering atmosphere of the middle-classes greatly influences the language of these elaborated code-users. The middle-class family raises the child to value individualism and to respond by using elaboration and discrimination in verbal situations. Middle-class children are continually exposed to the process of language elaboration; therefore, they practice and perfect their own abilities of differentiation and elaboration. While the elaborated code relies heavily on individualistic qualifications, Bernstein states that its most important quality is its complexity of language cues. He uses the term "formal" to apply to the elaborated code because it describes a dynamic interrelationship
between the code users and their environment. According to Bernstein, "Receptivity to a particular form of language structure determines the way relationships to objects are made and an orientation to a particular manipulation of words." The pressure on middle-class children to verbalize emotions in an individualistic way leads to an awareness of the "formal" ordering of surroundings; this ordering makes increased levels of conceptualization possible, linking times and space and increasing the ordering of symbolic relationships.

Bernstein's study concluded that the working-class family structure was less formally organized than that of the middle-class structure. This affected the development of the child and subsequently his language in several ways. The long term goals of the middle-class which give rise to imaging future space and time connections make way for short term goals for the working-class, who do not place a high priority on working out of connections in future terms.

Bernstein refers to the working-class code as "public" language because it contains few personal qualifications and relies on descriptions of tangible, concise, visual symbols for expression. Feelings and emotions are not communicated verbally; rather, they are expressed by non-verbal means. Because of this, Bernstein feels that "... the emotional and cognitive differentiation of the working-class child is comparatively less developed, and the cues responded to in the environment are primarily of a qualitatively different order." Bernstein's insistence that response to cues in the environment either limit or expand language use is based on his theory that as the children respond to their environment, they learn and use their language. The working-class child, unlike the
middle-class child, responds primarily to cues which are immediately relevant, not attempting to make far-reaching connections. The insistence on the present and immediate constrains a time continuum and enables a child to make meanings only in a limited sense. Connections between means and distant ends are vague at best and most events are viewed as causal connections or separate unconnected facts rather than logical relationships. Answers to questions in most instances deal only with immediate facts and don't strain beyond the present.

Aside from the cognitive limitations, the "formal" and "public" codes affect children's relationships in schools. Bernstein theorizes that the working-class child's perception of language sets up a conflict or resistance to formal education. The teacher will often desire a mediate response from students and "public" code-users will respond in an immediate way instead. The teacher's use of "formal" language seems impersonal and distant to the "public" code-user; in turn, the expressive behavior and immediacy of response from these code-users often appears too aggressive to the teacher. The working-class child does not respond to the aspects of the language the school values; he/she resists learning extensive vocabulary, manipulation of words, extensive connections between ideas, and construction of ordered syntax. Attempts to change the cues and modes of language for the "public" user are attempts to change the basic system of perception and values; more often than not, the result is failure and frustration. At best, the teacher imposes an overlaid language system on an existing code. The students will not use the school's "formal" language outside the classroom because there is no permanent place for it in their world. According to Bernstein, the
system of a language user's perception of his environment determines the way the user applies structure to his language; the "public" user is constrained in the following ways:

It is important to realize that his difficulties in ordering a sentence and connecting sentence-problems of qualifying an object, quality, idea, sensitivity to time and its extensions and modifications, making sustained relationships are alien to the way he perceives and reacts to his immediate environment. The total system of his perception, which results in a sensitivity to content rather than the structure of objects, applies equally to the structure of a sentence.

Bernstein translates the perceptions of a public language user into specific characteristics of language use:

1. Short, grammatically simple, often unfinished sentences, a poor syntactical construction with a verbal form stressing the active mood.

2. Simple and repetitive use of conjunctions (so, then, and, because).

3. Frequent use of short commands and questions.

4. Rigid and limited use of adjectives and adverbs.

5. Infrequent use of impersonal pronouns as subjects (one, it).

6. Statements formulated as implicit questions which set up a sympathetic circularity, e.g., 'Just fancy,' 'It's only natural, isn't it?' 'I wouldn't have believed it.'

7. A statement of fact is often used as both a reason and a conclusion, or more accurately, the reason and conclusion are compounded to produce a categoric statement, e.g., 'Do as I tell you,' 'Hold on tight,' 'Lay off that.'

8. Individual selection from a group of idiomatic phrases will frequently be found.

9. Symbolism is of a low order of generality.
10. The individual qualification is implicit in the sentence structure, therefore it is a language of implicit meaning. It is believed that this fact determines the form of the language.\(^6\)

The implications of these qualities of the "public" or "restricted" language user translate into problems when writing becomes involved. Since the "restricted" code is used primarily to receive concrete, descriptive obvious information, it exists on a low level of imaginative conceptualization. Syntax usually consists of fast, short, unpAUesaed sentences primarily reinforcing specific, dominant words. Most frequently the language does not make use of intent; the restricted nature of the code reinforces the limited verbal signals the user sends to an audience.

Two noted Russian psycholinguists, Vygotsky and Luria, both stress the importance of this "planning" function of language with Vygotsky making the observation that abbreviated, condensed speech is a function of a social relationship where subjects of the dialogue are held in common. "Restricted" code-users assume their audience shares their code thereby minimizing elaboration. The words and sentence sequences refer to broad classes of contents, abstractions, making the tone of the language impersonal. This form of speech does not facilitate writing about individualized experiences because it tends to remove the "speaker" from personal involvement with the subject matter. Bernstein characterizes the "restricted" code-user as one who uses ritualistic modes of communication and frequently utilizes the descriptive and narrative forms to illustrate his intentions. Seldom does the user wait for planning signals from his fellow conversant in a speech situation whereas the "elaborated" code-user is sensitive to the verbal signals being exchanged between speakers and subsequently modifies his responses appropriately.
In essence, Bernstein's study goes beyond social to political; the rigid roles of language and socialization he attributes to the working class show that these code-users are penalized not only by the way they may handle the language and respond to their environments, but also in their failure to fully develop their cognitive potentials. The inability to adapt or plan their language leads to a conformity of usage which becomes rote; seldom do the users venture out of the repertoire they have mastered. Rather, they leave the linguistic freedom and explicitness to the "elaborated" code-users who find social and school situations much less threatening and prohibitive than do the "restricted" code-users.

One of the significant implications of Bernstein's theory is that a language reinforces how a member of a group relates to his own group and society at large; if a language-user is prohibited by experience from learning how to relate to segments of society other than his/her own, it narrows the ability to function and also to discriminate, analyze, and conceptualize alternative situations:

It is proposed that the two distinct forms of language-use arise because the organization of the two social strata is such that different emphases are placed on language potential. Once the emphasis or stress is placed, then the resulting forms of language-use progressively orient the speakers to distinct and different types of relationships to objects and persons, irrespective of the level of measured intelligence. 7

Many critics of Bernstein object to his negative characterizations of the working-class and its restrictions on language. These objections arise from the social implications regarding "restricted" code-users and his insistence that rigid socialization patterns result in arrested communication.
An American professor of English, Richard Ohmann, couches his objections to Bernstein's theories in Marxist terms: attempting to educate workers must also involve making up a cognitive and linguistic deficit. Ohmann objects generally to Bernstein's main concepts of "class" and "code." According to Ohmann, Bernstein's factors that denote class such as income, education, and occupation are conveniently correlated with other variables such as speech patterns, I.Q. ratings, and child-rearing practices; in short, any patterns that can be measured are conveniently linked together. Since any one variable can be substituted for another, Ohmann suggests Bernstein's concepts of "codes" and "class" are suspect. This suspicion does not, however, inhibit Ohmann from substituting his own foundations for class and language distinctions. He makes a Marxist's distinction by equating class and levels of production and applying them to linguistic codes. Within a Marxian framework, a class is defined by its relationship both to the means of production and to other classes as well; however, Ohmann's classes are not as static as Bernstein's. Society and speech continually impinge on one another so language and class are not fixed, they are variable. Situations can determine language usage because speakers adjust language to appropriate levels according to the social circumstances. When we use codes, we do so in collaboration with others within a context of family roles, institutional roles, and peer relationships. From this viewpoint, Ohmann’s analysis of language and class relationships is that they are inseparable, but dialectical: society creates and molds speech, but speech continually challenges the power structure of society. Ohmann's qualifications on Bernstein's theories are important because they refute in large measure
the idea that influences of income, job status, years of schooling and familial attitudes can exist as sole determinants of language codes. Ohmann does, however, reinforce Bernstein's attitudes that there are significantly different language codes and that these codes were manifested differently by the respective working and middle classes.

In a project to determine the influence of class upon language, Ohmann conducted a study in 1978 entitled "The Unemployment Tapes." The survey was funded by The Connecticut Council for the Humanities and was designed to interview members of an industrial area of Connecticut about causes of unemployment in order to study speech habits of different classes. Those being interviewed had no reason to believe their language was being studied since the topic was a controversial one in the area, and the interviews were conducted in a casual, conversational way by young, unintimidating students. Ohmann discovered as a result of these interviews that ordinary workers, the unemployed, and street people

... did not elaborate, rank, or expand their ideas much, did not make many distinctions, made few logical and causal connections, did not develop abstract ideas, did not relate their words very explicitly to context, and referred little to the discourse itself in a critical or metalinguistic way.8

The middle-class speakers, however, performed very well in all those same areas also displaying an ability to reflect while speaking, and to make verbal corrections based on reconsideration. Workers who were interviewed were unable to move from the question/answer format and often responded when asked, "I don't know," or "I can't think of anything." The middle-class speakers often rejected the form of the questions as
interviewers phrased them; showing an adeptness at language manipulation and elaboration, they replaced the questions with their own versions so they could respond more effectively. They used the language to their own advantage which never occurred with the workers. When interviewed workers spoke about industry, it became an uncontrollable abstraction for them. "Not enough jobs" was a fact of life, but they were unable, even when gently pressed by interviewers, to venture opinions and ideas. They behaved much like Bernstein's "restricted" code-users who were most comfortable using generalized language and not elaborating on specific situations.

Ohmann does not put a value on the content of the language of the two groups: in fact, he refers to one middle-class user, the mayor, as giving "vapid responses." While he may denigrate the content of the middle-class code, he does place a value on their ability to control the language in an appropriate way for individual situations, and to use language in a powerful, not powerless way. The hesitancy in the workers' language, Ohmann believes, is symptomatic of the lack of control the workers feel they have over their environment. Ohmann summarizes his conclusions involving his study of class and language as those of "depressing circularity" because the inability to manage the language creates an inability to manipulate the environment.

Although Ohmann's findings are slanted toward a political interpretation of class disparity between the two groups of language-users, his descriptions of the middle and working class codes are remarkably consistent with Bernstein's "restricted" code-users while his middle-class speakers share the language characteristics of Bernstein's "elaborated"
code-users. Ohmann may disagree with Bernstein about the societal causes behind the codes; nonetheless, he does produce and define two distinct codes as a result of his research. His list of characteristics for the working-class speakers is remarkably similar to Bernstein's:

1. The length and complexity of language is much diminished.
2. There is little coordination and almost no subordination.
3. There are few causal or logical connections.
4. There are few adjectives and adverbs and what there are consist mainly of degree.
5. Most abstract nouns appear mainly in simple constructions with the verb 'to be' and are unrelated to one another.
6. There are few references to the context of the discussion and pronoun reference is extremely vague with no references to the discourse itself.9

The inability of the "restricted" code-user to abstract, to elaborate syntactically, to make logical connections linguistically can be identified independently of causes; although Bernstein and Ohmann differ on their definitions for "class" and "code," their work still signifies there is a "restricted" code syndrome that is reflected in speech and writing.

One of the most impressive and comprehensive studies of class and language was conducted by Walter Loban, a language professor at the University of California, Berkeley. Begun in 1953, the study was constructed to investigate the language of school children in Oakland, California and hoped to discover the stages, predictability, growth rate, and proficiency of language development by tracing 338 subjects from kindergarten through graduation from high school. This longitudinal
study was exceptional on two counts: the length of time over which the
study was conducted on the subjects and the remarkable stability of the
group being studied. Of the original 338 students who began the study,
211 remained until eighteen years of age.

Because Loban hoped to apply the results of his study to any large
urban population in America, he conducted his research in an area of
Oakland which had a broad cross section of socioeconomic groups: he
used students from poor industrial, middle-class, and upper middle-class
families, leaving out children of the highest professional Bay Area
group which might not be duplicated in other American cities. Loban's
study differed from Bernstein's in intent because it held no previous
assumptions regarding class and language prior to the study. It also
was an intention of this study to make pedagogical recommendations to
aid children's language development. Bernstein's emphasis in the peda-
gogical area is to suggest that schools recognize the existence of the
two codes; integrate them so all children have access to universalistic,
elaborated codes; and, focus attention on deep structures of subject
area topics rather than surface structures. In this sense, "restricted"
code-users would have a chance to focus on understanding "how knowledge
is created" rather than "why it is essential to acquire particular
states of knowledge."

Bernstein's study began with a pre-conceived idea of class rela-
tionships to codes and then applied this knowledge to a pedagogy which
emphasizes recognition of the respective codes, restrictions included,
to optimize linguistic choices for students. He accepts as fact that
the school transmits, both implicitly and explicitly, middle-class values which affect contexts and contents of educational practices.

Loban's groups, in both poor and middle-class student groups, share many of the characteristics of Bernstein's working and middle-class groups. However, the focus of Loban's initial investigative purpose was to study the proficiency of language at various levels and to determine predictable sequences of language growth at various stages of development. Loban did not intend at the outset of his study to equate class and language; he selected the variable of socioeconomic status along with sex, ethnic background, and spread of intellectual ability because these were the primary traits used to identify children's language patterns in previous studies.

The "spread of intellectual ability" factor was initially determined by a Kindergarten vocabulary test of one hundred items with the next intelligence testing, the Kuhlman-Anderson Intelligence Test, administered by the Oakland Public School System when the students were in second grade. Other intelligence testing was performed periodically throughout the term of study.

Since the cost of individual reports on the total group's data was prohibitive, three special groups of thirty-five students each were selected from the sample group as a whole and their data was reported in depth. In order to select these three groups, for thirteen years all their language Arts and English teachers rated all students on organization, control, and communication skills. These ratings were averaged and thirty-five students who rated highest in language proficiency were selected (High Group), as well as thirty-five lowest-level achievers
(Low Group), and from a table of random numbers, a cross section of thirty-five students (Random Group) represented the total group. Once selected, the researchers retroactively began the study of the respective groups' language development from Kindergarten through grade twelve.

The amount of comprehensive data developed is impressive. The spectrum of language use such as reading, writing, and listening was studied, not just the oral forms. In this major way Loban's study is more comprehensive in examining both the written and oral forms of language than either Bernstein or Ohmann, who primarily stress the oral forms over the textual.

Beginning in grade three, students' written language was tested and in grades ten through twelve, two or more compositions were selected annually for each subject. There were also tests of listening ability, STEP; and every year of the study, teachers rated students on a five point scale for listening. Reading tests on either the Sanford or California tests of reading achievement gave two or more scores for each subject. Loban states that a staggering 380,000 words of spoken and written language were available for research at the conclusion of the study.

Although Loban did not have a preconceived formula for class and language at the outset of his study, certainly some of his "Hypotheses Being Studied" list indicates some bias in understanding language behavior and development:

1. Subjects from above-average socioeconomic status will develop the resources of language earlier and to a greater proficiency than subjects from below-average socioeconomic status.
2. Subjects proficient in language will use more optional grammatical transformations in their sentence structures and will be more accurate in their obligatory grammatical transformations than those lacking in proficiency.

3. It will be possible to construct a weighted index of syntax elaboration, an index which will correlate highly with other measures of language competence. By elaboration we mean such syntactical features as adverbs, clauses, phrases, appositives and so forth—the ways by which the basic subject and predicate are expanded.

4. Subjects with high ability in language will use more adverbial clauses of cause, concession, and condition than subjects with low language ability.

5. Subjects with high ability in language will use more adverbial clauses of cause, concession, and condition than subjects with low language ability.

6. Subjects with high language proficiency will use relational words (e.g., connectors) more frequently, accurately, and earlier than other subjects.10

Inherent in these hypotheses to be tested is the idea that upper and middle class children will perform well and early in language tasks and poor or working class children will develop the same skills later in life and with less proficiency. Bernstein's exact language is not duplicated but the concept of proficiency in language is equated with elaborated syntax, optional grammatical transformations, increased use of modifiers, and rational connections between ideas. Bernstein's "restricted" and "elaborated" classifications could easily be applied to Loban's findings.

Although Loban makes the distinguishing factor once again between language potential and actual usage, his conclusions derived from the study are similar to Bernstein and Ohmann:

On rating scores used for thirteen years, the 35 subjects who were rated high excelled the 70 typical and low subjects in control of ideas expressed. They had an overview,
a plan for their talk and writing that showed coherence and unity. They spoke not only freely, fluently and easily, but also effectively, using a rich variety of vocabulary. They adjusted the pace of their words to their listeners, and their inflection or “imparting tone” was adapted both to the meaning of their content and to the needs of their listeners. They were, themselves, attentive and creative listeners.

Once again the High Group showed an ability to adapt to audience, to manipulate the language while speaking and writing, and to have an open-ended sense of the language reflecting the "planning ability" that Vygotsky and Luria find so essential to language development. The Low Group, on the other hand

... rambled without purpose, seemingly unaware of the needs of the listener. Their vocabulary was meager, and as listeners they did not focus on relationships or note how main ideas control illustrations or subordinate ideas. Their writing was disorganized, and they were painful "decipherers" rather than fluent readers.

In typing class and language together, Loban points out that the connection is both central and controversial. All three groups reported on in this study contained students with various ethnic backgrounds, but the same was not true of socioeconomic backgrounds. The High Group students were from the upper and middle-class families while the Low Group students were from poor industrial families. In all instances studied, there was never an ability difference between ethnic groups, only from socioeconomic groups. Loban concludes that in this research study, "complexity is related to social background and language proficiency."

When reading Loban's conclusions on language and class relationships, it is interesting to note that even while he is protesting the unfairness of class orders, his ideas sound remarkably like Bernstein's. He continues Bernstein's equations of family life and language complexity;
and implicitly, the comparison between complexity of cognition and the complexity of language abilities.

It was not until Mina Shaughnessy's classic book, *Errors and Expectations*, in 1977 that some of the distinctions made between "restricted" and "elaborated" code-users were examined from a new perspective. In the late 1960's and early 1970's, colleges admitted many students who previously would not have been considered "college material." The students Shaughnessy describes in her book were

... those who had been left so far behind the others in their formal education that they appeared to have little chance of catching up; students whose difficulties with the written language seemed of a different order than those of the other groups, as if they had come, you might say, from a different country, or at least through different schools, where even very modest standards of high-school literacy had not been met.  

It is this group, the class of writers Shaughnessy identified as "basic writers," that her book investigates and provides insight into. This is the first primary study wherein the "restricted" language-user was studied in depth; also, there was not the usual focus on class as it reflected ability. Rather than "restricted" and "elaborated" classes, writers were referred to as "experienced" or "basic and inexperienced." The shift in connotation is that these basic writers don't lack cognitive or class structure abilities, rather they lack experience in practicing language. Class distinction is not a presumption of ability. In fact, Shaughnessy spends little time on class distinctions; she directs her energies to studying the characteristics of the basic writer to provide pedagogical practices which will help teachers understand their problems and introduce new methods of teaching writing for this specific group.
Shaughnessy's title, *Errors and Expectations*, is more than just an identification of the book's contents: it introduces the concept of error as a new variable by which to study writers. In previous studies, the focus was on the inability of students to produce. Their familial connections, class distinctions, and cognitive limitations were all classified as causes for failure with language. "Error" was reviewed as a result. Shaughnessy introduces "error" as a major cause of language difficulty: the fear of "error" paralyzes basic writers until they lose confidence in their abilities:

. . . they have lost confidence in the very faculties that serve all language learners: their ability to distinguish between essential and redundant features of a language left them logical but wrong; their ability to draw analogies between what they knew of language when they began school and what they had to learn produced mistakes; and such was the quality of their instruction that no one saw the intelligence of their mistakes or thought to harness that intelligence in the service of learning.  

The phrase "intelligence of their mistakes" characterizes the approach Shaughnessy uses in discussing basic writers. She sees very little that is random or illogical in their work; rather, there is a pattern to their errors that allows us to categorize errors of basic writers in order to help them. This same quotation also introduces a new concept: that basic writers did not receive "the quality of instruction" that could help them progress from their errors. Instead of Bernstein's and Loban's focus on "restricted" code-users being unable to meet language expectations of formal learning, Shaughnessy implies schools have failed to recognize and effectively address the problems of these writers.

It is interesting to compare Shaughnessy's explanations with Loban's and Bernstein's as she offers insights into the problems of basic writers
in the very areas they select as significant in dividing basic from experienced writers.

Elaboration is a desirable trait for a language-user according to all the researchers discussed. According to Bernstein, Ohmann, and Loban, elaboration is a characteristic of the middle-class who have practiced this ability through interaction with families and peer groups. Shaughnessy goes beyond this explanation to examine another important cause:

... the demand for elaboration is likely to be viewed as a demand for mere bulk and, being unfamiliar with the ways writers generate their material, the student falls back on the strategies that enable talkers to support and extend their conversations with one another. Often these are strategies, however, that discourage deliberate thorough inquiry of the sort demanded in analytical writing.16

Once again Shaughnessy stresses that it is unfamiliarity rather than limited ability which hampers the basic writer.

Another trait of the "restricted" language-users noted by Bernstein, Ohmann, and Loban is their inability to produce logical rational thought in textual form. Shaughnessy has this explanation:

... the teacher often concludes that thinking rather than writing ought to be the focus of his instruction. Such an interpretation tends to isolate the student's difficulty with writing from the linguistic situation he finds himself in and focuses instead on the functioning of the brain, proposing various types of thinking tasks designed to develop the brain.17

The pragmatic nature of this observation differentiates Shaughnessy's view of basic writers from previous investigators; Shaughnessy feels teachers confuse the analysis of thought with the generation of thought: "Thought may be logical, but logic itself is not a way of thinking."18

According to Shaughnessy, the student needs to work on ways he/she can
control his/her thought processes which are already developed. Even basic writers, says Shaughnessy, can produce work which may not be acceptable examples of academic essays but will contain ideas that could be developed in an academic style. Even the connections between statements in a basic writer's paper may not appear logical on the surface, but hold a logic for the writer which will appear consistently throughout his work.

Bernstein and Loban make much of the fact that "restricted" code-users rely on the concrete rather than the abstract. Shaughnessy sees this as a simplification of the problem observing that basic students' difficulty is actually moving between abstract and concrete statements. Students are not used to formulating thesis statements and then defending them with specifics; also, basic writers can see the general points of a concrete situation, but lack the vocabulary to discuss it in abstractions.

The "Expectations" part of Shaughnessy's work strikes an optimistic note that none of the previous research displays. Rather than the "depressing circularity" of Ohmann, we have the concept of emerging competency. The burden of adapting is not placed upon basic writers; rather, a process of cooperation is suggested to ease the gaps between classes and to develop new methods of dealing with deficiencies:

The result will be, in time, not so much a simplified view of written English as a more profound grasp of what lies below the prescriptive bits and pieces of instruction we once called English composition.

Shaughnessy acknowledges class structures exist, but rejects the traditional methods of looking for a precise answer and one overall method to help basic students; rather, she suggests we should draw on
the familiar models of their own language patterns and make learning a shared effort with shared responsibilities. The opening up of possibilities in language as Shaughnessy presents it greatly reduces the importance of class structure.

Shaughnessy's book opened new horizons for teachers of non-standard code-users. Not only had this group finally been identified as "basic writers" but examples of their work and explication involving those examples supported Shaughnessy's claims that we needed a new pedagogy to instruct these writers. Also, *Errors and Expectations* focused on the textual codes of language usage; most previous studies had stressed oral over textual codes in discussing "basic" code-users. For the first time, these writers whose work was familiar to English teachers were not only classified as a group but also identified as one which could be helped by understanding their common writing problems and learning from their errors.

Shaughnessy appears to move a great distance from Bernstein's study of "restricted" and "elaborated" code-users so closely tied to class systems. However, she does expect shared, common understood knowledge to be translated into explicit, structurally "acceptable" language in order to achieve the "expectations" of college life and society in general. Critics, such as John Rouse, another researcher in English composition, complain that Shaughnessy's rules and patterns for language development of basic writers are not really meaningful alternatives to the particular class codes they are familiar with:

Having taken as her task the socializing of these young people, Shaughnessy concerns herself with rules and patterns, develops a program using positional controls,
with authority and rationality as key concepts. Here the order of doing becomes very important, as students are led from sentence to paragraph to essay, from narration to description to comparison and on through the rhetorical forms in a thoroughly rationalized sequence. So they learn to conform with the demands of a social mechanism that moves independently of their feeling and thought. In Rouse's opinion, Shaughnessy's advice is much like Bernstein's and Loban's: she is attempting to re-educate students in a code different from their own. In a sense, the overriding concern of educational institutions for how something is said rather than what is actually said can stifle the egocentric nature of basic writers who are already anxious about their writing and having difficulty expressing themselves.

In spite of the criticisms leveled by various researchers in the field of "restricted" or "basic" language-users, most all agree on the general characteristics of the group as code-users: limited syntactical structures, few modifying clauses, inability to move between general and specific ideas, inability to make language serve specific ideas, limited use of modification and low level use of logic and elaboration. All of the researchers agree that language is essential for participation in a culture; some agree that according to class background, middle-class children will grow up with more of a sense of power to change their world because of their strong language abilities. Even Ohmann concedes many individuals change their class positions by adopting new modes of language and cognition.

Also, one might disagree with Bernstein's equation of class with language ability, but his insight that a "restricted" language-user must take time to translate the "elaborated" code through his own "restricted" code as an interpretive measure, is a valid description of a basic
writer's methodology and one which partly explains his/her prime difficulty in manipulating the language confidently. Bernstein is also correct in his analysis of the "restricted" code as one in which there are closely shared linguistic forms. The results of this characteristic are that speakers' intentions are seldom elaborated verbally and the language clues involve a low level of syntactic and vocabulary selection. Certainly any teacher of basic writers could agree that the lack of audience awareness and the inability to elaborate syntactically partially derive from an assumption by the code-users that language is closed and shared.

In brief, it is impossible to dismiss the contributions and analyses of Bernstein and Loban based solely on their equation of class and language, for inherent in their research are many useful and pertinent observations about the basic code-user. However, it is my opinion after working for eight years with basic writers, that Bernstein's class restrictions are particularly locked into the British class system and that this entire aspect of his research involving basic language-users may not significantly apply to American "restricted" code-users. It was, therefore, with great interest that I read a recent response, in *College English*, 1983, to Richard Ohmann's article on "Reflections on Class and Language by Peter Owens, a professor of composition at Fitchburg State College in Massachusetts.

Owens studied five classes of writers, three classes of "standard" writers and two classes of "basic" writers (his terms) in an attempt to determine the validity of Bernstein's class/code categories as they applied to American students, and arrived at the following conclusion:
... traditional social class measures of parental income and parental levels of education were not related to whether or not students spoke or wrote in elaborated or restricted codes. ... in two classes of basic writers who exhibited strong restricted code language characteristics, 60% reported having grown up in financially 'comfortable homes' and only 17.4% reported their families having to struggle financially. Standard-level students with significantly greater elaborated code skills reported struggling financially in 20% of the cases.21

This would tend to contradict Bernstein's theory that poor working-class families promoted the "restricted" code by limiting the possibilities of alternate language meanings for the users. Also, Bernstein's theory that the working-class does not support or value language usage is not validated by Owen's study because 60% of his students could be classified in Bernstein's terms as "middle-class elaborated" code-users. Conversely, some of the "standard" code-users reported a poor, working class background.

Another of Bernstein's explanations for the failure of the working-classes to use the elaborated syntax was that undereducated, working-class parents put no value on education and discouraged their children from attending college; this put additional pressure on "restricted" code-users to limit language exploration. Owens found this theory did not hold up with American basic language-users:

There was virtually no difference in the degree of parental support for sons and daughters going to college whether students were elaborated code users or restricted code users ... I attested whether or not students from more authoritarian backgrounds may have more difficulties with the elaborated code demands of exposition composition. Almost half of the basic writers in my study (45.5%) reported that their parents 'reasoned' with them most of the time when growing up. Over one-third (36.4%) felt their parents let them do 'pretty much as they pleased.' These were heavy restricted code speakers and writers, nonetheless.22
Again this contradicts Bernstein's notion that working-class parents are extremely authoritarian and this attitude determines the way the language code is handed to and learned by their children. Much of the language is given in commands and does not lend itself to elaboration. Clearly, Owens did not find this to be true within his groups of basic students; in fact, over one-third of his group reported leniency as a characteristic of their parents.

Another major difference between the British and American research results was that the American basic language-users reported their fathers had an average of 3.1 years of higher education, while the standard-level group reported a nearly identical 3.2 years. Although the educational backgrounds of the families were nearly the same, the differences in writing and language use within the two groups were distinct and easily identified.

Although Owens' study seems a very limited one compared to Bernstein's, I suspect, based on my own and others' experiences, that its findings could be duplicated many times over if one studied the make-up of basic writers in American programs. What then, is the importance of Bernstein's and Loban's ideas about "restricted" and "elaborated" codes? Even though they do not seem to be directly related to American educational or social systems as a whole, as Owens points out, they still signify that there is a restricted code syndrome that is reflected in problems with both writing and speech. Also, he states, "... traditional sociological categories of apparent influential language variables demand serious scrutiny if not outright skepticism." Bernstein, Loban, and Ohmann have advanced the research of "restricted" code-users
by identifying them and by offering causes for their condition which provoke other researchers to challenge their variables and conclusions.

The fact that these various studies have isolated common mechanical and syntactic characteristics of basic code-users, irrespective of whether class structure is involved in their individual theories or not, assures us that we can examine basic writers as a group; commonality is a beginning point for studies which delve further into the characteristics and causes of the writing this group produces.

The basic writing students who comprise my study group for this dissertation are present and past students from the Writing Workshop, the basic writing program of the English department at The Ohio State University. My involvement for eight years with this program as a teacher, administrator, and curriculum designer is an obvious reason for wanting to use this group for research. However, there are other essential reasons as well. Both Loban's and Shaughnessy's groups hold significant numbers of subjects who use English as a second language; this might tend to make these students have more difficulties with the language, particularly in textual form, than native-speaking basic language-users. Obviously, this would have to be weighed in the results of their studies, albeit formally or informally. Since English as a Second Language is taught as a separate section from basic writing at Ohio State, these second-language users are not involved in the basic writing program; all students used in the study group are native speakers.

Also, many studies, including Shaughnessy's and Loban's, include large groups of students from urban areas where individuals are often linked together by common customs, ethnicity, and language. It would
seem logical that because of these factors, their language codes would be more "restricted" and that they would make use of more non-verbal than verbal characteristics of communication. Also, they would assume their audience, whether from an oral or textual viewpoint, would share their code; therefore, less language elaboration would seem necessary. The students in the Writing Workshop are drawn from a variety of backgrounds which seem to balance out in classes; urban, suburban, and rural areas are all represented. Therefore, no one ethnic, socioeconomic, or racial group either dominates the group as a whole or radically influences variables in studying this particular group.

For these reasons, the students who comprise the Writing Workshop population are an excellent group to study. One can concentrate on writing characteristics without accounting for many of the variables which influence other studies.

The Writing Workshop at Ohio State evolved from a pilot project in 1976 which was set up to offer remedial work in English composition. In 1977, the Program enrolled 1,000 students who were placed in either English 100.01, the lowest-level course; or, English 100.02, the higher level course. In 1980, an additional course was offered, English 100.03, which replaced English 100.02 as the higher level placement; English 100.02 was then used for students who were required to take two quarters of remedial work prior to enrolling in the required freshman English course, English 110. The English 100.03 placement was used for students who required only one course prior to English 110. In 1982, course numbers were changed by the University to reflect the remedial status of the courses: English 100.01 became English 050; English 100.02 became
English 051; and, English 100.03 became English 060. The concept and contents of the courses did not alter with the number changes.

The traditional placement method of assigning individual students to the correct courses has been maintained without significant changes throughout the history of the program. During summer orientation programs at Ohio State, students with English ACT scores of 15 and below and English SAT scores of 37 and below are required to write a one hour placement examination. During the summer of 1984, in a continuing effort by the Ohio Board of Regents to upgrade public education, incoming freshmen students who had English ACT scores above 15 and English SAT scores of above 37 but had not taken four years of high school English were also required to write a one hour placement examination. The placement examinations were in the form of an essay and students were allowed to choose among three possible questions. These questions were varied from day-to-day in an attempt to eliminate advance preparation by the students taking them.

Three members of the Workshop teaching staff evaluated essays each summer using broad guidelines to place students in the correct courses. In general, a student was placed in English 060 if his/her essay demonstrated a grasp of rhetorical qualities such as a clear thesis, topic sentences, unity, organization, development; and contained relatively few mechanical errors or surface errors that did not obstruct communication. A student was placed in English 050 if the essay revealed significant problems with basic composition skills resulting in incoherence, or if it contained many errors, especially if the errors were relatively serious ones, such as garbled syntax. The ACT and SAT scores really can
not accurately reflect the writing abilities of students since they don't actually allow students to practice composition during these examinations; nonetheless, these test scores have proven an effective placement guideline for showing the overall language abilities of students and certainly are valid predictors of which students should be required to write placement exams. In the event students write essays which are easy to read and are well-organized, containing few errors in any one grammatical or mechanical area, they bypass the Writing Workshop and are placed in English 110. Therefore, students are not necessarily penalized for their low test scores if their writing abilities rise to the English 110 level.

From Summer Quarter 1980 to Spring Quarter 1981, a total of 2,281 students received grades in The Writing Workshop; from Summer 1981 through Spring 1982, 2,171 students received grades. This coming academic year in Autumn Quarter of 1984, an expected 8,000 freshmen will enter Ohio State and of these 1,080 will be enrolled in the Writing Workshop for Fall Quarter alone. The basic program is a large one and draws students from all over the state as well as out-of-state.

In 1977 an extensive profile was completed of Writing Workshop students; although numbers have fluctuated, the profile, as a whole, remains fairly consistent. Writing Workshop students represent a cross-section of the male-female distribution of freshmen at Ohio State University. In Autumn Quarter 1977, 52% of the students in University College were male: 48% were female. The percentage of men enrolled in the Writing Workshop was only 5% higher: 57% of the students enrolled were men and 43% were women. The men appeared to be slightly less well prepared for writing exposition since 56% of students enrolled in the lowest course,
English 050, were men and only 52% were men in English 060, the higher level course.

In terms of race, the students in the Workshop were not representative of the entering freshmen class. In Autumn 1977, 91% of the 7,000 freshmen who indicated "race" reported they were white, 8% were black, and 1% indicated another minority. Within these racial categories, 19% of the white students had English ACT scores of 15 and below, while 67% of the black students submitted English ACT scores of 15 and below and 45% of the other minority students had ACT scores of 15 and below. Because the majority of freshmen at Ohio State are white, they constituted two-thirds of the students enrolled; the remaining third was comprised of students who indicated they were black or minority students. Although accurate statistics have not been compiled as yet for the entering class of 1984, the office of Minority Affairs at Ohio State confirms the proportion of minorities in the Writing Workshop will be consistent with the figures of 1977.24

The high school English experiences of the Writing Workshop students are as varied as their personal backgrounds. The 1977 studies showed the majority of students ranked somewhere in the "average" range in their graduating classes. However, a small number represented the superior range including class valedictorians and honors students. There seemed to be no correlation between high school class rank and writing placements, so these ranks could not be considered valid predictors of students' writing abilities.

When students were asked to fill in information sheets regarding language backgrounds, it was significant that only a small percentage had
taken four years of English. This has been a constant factor in the Writing Workshop. Most students take English survey courses which theoretically include literature and writing but in actuality are literature courses with writing confined to book reports, essay responses to questions posed at conclusions of chapters, and elaboration of questions developed by teachers to test reading comprehension. The writing courses students take, very often as electives, usually involve how to write a research paper, or, at most, how to construct a five-paragraph theme. Grammar drills are still widely used with mostly ineffective results. These facts mean that even students who claim to have taken three years or more of English have not necessarily become competent users of the language textually, certainly as it applies to their ability to write exposition.

Grades students received in high school for their English work are not predictors of performance either. Like high school rankings, they vary with the standards of the respective high schools. Many students from small rural areas have had little to no experience with expository writing; even students from large urban areas who have been enrolled in writing classes received little feedback on their work because classes were so crowded. Many students from affluent suburban areas have taken compulsory writing courses, but the focus has been on grammar, mechanics, and the research paper leaving them poorly prepared for personal experience and expository composition. Fairly high grades in high school compared to actual low writing ability is a frequent characteristic of a Writing Workshop student, and this clarifies the frustrations of some students at receiving low scores on verbal tests and at being placed in
a remedial writing program when their grades in English suggest more satisfactory achievements in this discipline.

Like Peter Owens, I cannot relate basic writing to class structure from my experiences with students in the Writing Workshop. The Workshop is a melting pot of students whose socioeconomic and academic backgrounds vary drastically. Rather, I would present the Writing Workshop students as those who exemplify the characteristics of "restricted" or basic language code-users as described by Bernstein, Ohmann, Loban and Shaughnessy. It is essential to establish the relationship between the basic code and these students in order to use them as valid subjects; also, these same students will be used in ensuing chapters to support my arguments for new ways of identifying basic code-users.

The student examples used in this chapter are all taken from Summer Orientation Placement exams, 1984. These samples were all written under the same conditions; the same number of prompt choices, the same time allowances were given to each student. Although students may have written at different times during the Summer Placement Program, the conditions remained the same. Student ACT/SAT scores are included with their samples to indicate their scores prior to taking basic writing courses and also as an indicator of their overall English abilities as measured by the tests. All student writing samples will be duplicated without editing so their errors, syntactic and mechanical, may be evaluated more effectively.

One characteristic of basic code-users mentioned frequently by all the researchers is that these students are unable to elaborate either orally or textually when they use language. This is also a prime trait
of Writing Workshop students, as the following examples will demonstrate.

Prompt questions are duplicated in order to more easily follow the students' responses:

Prompt: Your knowledge of where you grew up has led you to form definite opinions about that place. Explain the advantages or disadvantages about growing up where you lived.

**Student A (ACT 9)**

Were I grew up, was a good place to grow up. The very first school I went to was right across the street, from our house. Our house was in walking distance from my high school and my junior high school.

The friendships that I developed there were and still are good ones. Our house is close to a shopping mall were we do all our shopping.

The disadvantages of were I grew up; Are the neighborhood is run down. There are some criminals. I have been in some fights.

But all in all I liked growing up were I did. It was lots of things to do.

On the plus side, this writer does respond to the prompt; he discusses, albeit in a totally vague manner, where he grew up. He also divides his text into advantages and disadvantages which shows some ability to organize in terms of the prompt. However, this student's writing exemplifies Shaughnessy's belief that basic writers show an inability to move between abstract and concrete patterns. Clearly the student understands the point of the prompt; his text reflects this. However, his syntax is little more than a slightly elaborated list of the advantages of where he lived. His concluding statements that he liked the place and that there were "lots of things to do" remain a mystery to the reader because
he has failed to elaborate on them. It is telling that this amount of writing is all this student produced in one hour.

Prompt: Sometimes we feel a need to escape from daily problems and commitments that can seem overpowering. Select one method of escape that works for you, and explain why it works so well.

Student B (ACT II)

Start One

Many people face daily problems and commitments which destroy their personal and professional lives. They tend to forget or let pride get in the way when seeking help. Our society offers many clinics ————

Start Two

Daily problems and commitments can overpower our life because we don't take enough time to fully develop potential. We focus on daily trends instead of life long goals. If we plan our future and still take time, ————

Start Three

Many of use use excuses as a means of overlooking our problems ————

Start Four

Our lives our filed with pressures from friends, parents and our job ————

Start Five

A place were one has grown up definately has effected our live style and our viewpoints. We have a different outlook on life ————
Start Six (Actual beginning used in essay)

Everyone needs to escape from life's endless commitments. But how? One must take time to live their life to its fullest potential. We need to make time from our busy schedule and do some sort of activity in which we enjoy.

This basic writer's paper is interesting because of the several starts she makes prior to committing herself in Start Six. Writer B shows much more sophistication than Writer A; her sentences, simple, compound, and complex, show much more varied structures and her thoughts are related to one another in a logical manner. However, this writer displays the tendency Shaughnessy discusses in her book:

... Two strategies in particular dominate student writing well beyond the BW stage: the substitution of common wisdom in the form of platitudes or routine affirmations for careful individual inquiry and the drift from stated general purposes toward personal reverie... as it turns out this draws them further and further from the formal topic.25

Writer B's Starts One and Two show her using "wisdom in the form of platitudes" which doesn't allow her to move as quickly as she would like into her main topic; she seems to feel her generalizing is not working and in Starts Three and Four her introductory statements are somewhat more specific. Apparently not focused enough for her to continue in any meaningful way, however, because Start Five shows that the writer is so frustrated she moves to the other prompt choice on the examination. In moving to the new prompt choice, she begins her difficulties all over again by writing platitudes about "where we grow up." Sensing this, the writer returns to her original prompt and begins a fairly specific introduction.

This writer displays a common characteristic of basic writers in general: they learn as they practice and they show frustration as they
practice. It is not just introductions to papers that require constant revision, but sometimes each single sentence in a paper which often raises the frustration level of the writers beyond a point where they can produce any effective writing. It is interesting to note that as Writer B progresses, she increases spelling errors, which have not been that frequent in her first attempts.

Bernstein's characterization of the basic or "restricted" code-user as one who produces short, grammatically simple, often unfinished sentences, is exemplified by the following two writers:

Prompt: Select one person, group, idea, activity, or goal that is important to you. Explain the significance that this person, group, idea, activity, or goal has for you.

**Student C (ACT 13)**

My main goal in life is to be a very successful person. I want to do better than other members of my family. I want to get a degree from Ohio State and put it to good use. I think it's very important for a person to do the best they can; in whatever they try to do. Once you start something you should finish. I'm going to try to do the best I can. I'm going to study very hard. College plays a very important role in your future. You have to do things on your own. You can not depend on others. None is going to make you go to school or study for tests. It's all up to you. A winning person never quits what he starts. This is definitely my main goal. As long as you try to do the best as you can. You will always feel good about yourself.

Prompt: Your knowledge of where you grew up has led you to form definite opinions about that place. Explain the advantages or disadvantages about growing up where you lived.

**Student D (ACT 13)**

I grew up in a small town in Ohio. It has a definite outlook on life. It's not so much were you lived; but how you were raised by your parents. For example our family
was raised in a farming community but; none of my brothers and sister would like to live on the farm. My father was raised on the farm. But he moved away and to college. He got a degree in engineering. My brother followed my dad's steps with the same engineering degree. He grew up with farming. I myself am planning on the same degree; But I also grew up with the same background.

In the case of Writer C, the sample represents the entire piece of writing which was accomplished during an hour's time. Student D has three more paragraphs of the same type of writing displayed in his sample which were also completed during the same time period. In both samples, the sentences are short and choppy. The pattern of each, subject-verb-object or subject-verb-complement, illustrates the inability of the students to connect ideas in a more complex manner, even in a coordinate manner. In one sense, both samples are like Student A's paper; they are structured like a list with some additional words placed around the main items in the list. The punctuation used in Student D's sample is interesting because it reaffirms Shaughnessy's theories that basic writers create their own logical patterns to illustrate sentence boundaries:

... it appears from their punctuation habits that the writers often perceive sentences to be rhetorical units that are longer or shorter than the grammatical sentence. Furthermore there often appears to be a psychological resistance to the period perhaps because it imposes an end on a unit the writer has usually had difficulty beginning or doesn't want to finish. It says that the writer must mobilize himself for another beginning, almost always a formidable task for an inexperienced writer.26

Unlike Student C who uses the full period to mark off each single thought, Student D uses a semicolon. In a way, Student D is attempting to make a half-way commitment to a more complicated construction by tying two ideas together. He does this in sentences two, three, and seven which shows an
awareness of a complexity that requires more than one simple sentence followed by another to create a completed thought. Shaughnessy's theory that the impulse to create complicated sentences is often ahead of the ability to do so is apparent in Student D's sample.

The inability to use punctuation often leads to strange start/stop patterns in the text of basic writers. It is as if syntax has no relationship to the punctuation marks used by the writer; rather, the writer uses them because he/she feels they are necessary additions to please the teacher:

Prompt: Your knowledge of where you grew up has led you to form definite opinions about that place. Explain the advantages or disadvantages about growing up where you lived.

Student E (ACT 14)

I grew up in Columbus. I'm sure that there are many advantages and disadvantages about growing up in Columbus. I will not talk about.

One. Advantage may be that the person living in Columbus get to experience. All Four Seasons. Unlike a person living in Florida. Or California, they usually only experience the warm weather. Where in Columbus you can experience the snow. And all that it brings.

The punctuation marks in Student E's text set off spurts of thought; the writer punctuates as he thinks. An excellent example of this is line four where he begins to enumerate his ideas, "One." While his next sentence would not make sense to a standard language-user, it does to him because it is an extension of his list of ideas he is going to present. "All Four Seasons" represents an afterthought but because it seems like an entire idea to the writer, it becomes an entire sentence on the paper.
One important idea that is not dealt with by Bernstein and Loban to any great extent is that there is a sliding scale of ability of these basic writers. It is not that there is one level of proficiency; rather, there are several. Writer F represents the lowest scale:

Prompt: We have all had relationships that have had a major impact upon our lives. Select one relationship that has been especially important to you, and explain the significance of that relationship in your life.

Student F (ACT 4)

My coaches were a major important to me because I did not have a father. They showed me things about life and sports. For instance taught me about the young ladies of the world. I can remember when I was having major problem with my lady I went to my track coach and he explain how to handle the problem he up told me to be truth with the young lady and what I did a now me and the young lady are still together to this day. I'm trying to say I learn a major lesson there to tell truth is better than lying.

If it wasn't for sport and coaches I meant have been a drug dealer. I was heading into the wrong direction with some of my friends. I go into sport in 7 grade I start out with basketball and work hard to the the best in the school for 2 years until High School for 2 years. It was a big change to me because I was a star now I'm Frosh. and that mean startle all over again but I hand very well I became an star in two year by being push by coachees.

This writer is clearly at a low basic level; however, it is interesting that he has some of the English conventions included in his text: he does paragraph at a correct place; his response is all directed to the main topic sentence: coaches were important to him. Although the writing is practically a running narrative, it still responds to the prompt and displays an attempt to illuminate generalizations with specifics. This was the entire effort for an hour's examination time for this writer.
Prompt: Select one person, group, idea, activity, or goal that is important to you. Explain the significance that this person, group, idea, activity, or goal has for you.

Student G (ACT 13)

I had attended my school, Hathaway Brown, for seven years by the time I was in tenth grade. Being one out of the three Jewish girls in my class had always been difficult. However, in the seventh and eighth grades I faced many situations of anti-Semitism. I began denying that I was Jewish at all. I felt that being born Jewish was a big hardship. It was at this time a friend of mine introduced me to my temple youth group. Although I had no desire to attend youth group functions, I did indeed go. After a few meetings and get-togethers, I found myself enjoying the group. Through the group I was able to join an even larger group. When the group met on weekends I learned a lot about Jewish beliefs and more important it was a place for Jewish people to get together just to have fun.

There is a continuity and tying together of ideas in this paragraph, one of four the writer used to develop the entire essay, which shows an attempt to fully explain ideas to the reader as audience. Many of the sentences are brief and the entire paper has some syntactic and mechanical errors, but it shows an awareness that some of the earlier examples in this chapter fail to display. The fact that there is a gradation among basic writers' abilities is an important point to emphasize because it keeps these writers from being lumped together as a group. Standard writers are recognized as having individual abilities but too often the label "remedial" fails to make distinctions within the category.

In a final evaluation of Bernstein's and Loban's strict classifications of language codes, I would advance the argument that if basic code-users were totally restricted to codes by class alone, we would
tend not to see improvement or movement toward elaboration of the restricted code. It has been my experience that improvement not only takes place when restricted or basic users begin to experiment with language but also improves dramatically. The following examples taken from one student over a period of one quarter show the difference in language use during a ten week period.

Student H (050 placement) Week 1

Life on Campus involves quite a few styles communication; such as verbal, dress-apparel, facial expression, and attitude. We seem to communicate in ways that for personal reasons convey are thoughts and feelings. Some students and techer administrators may find it hard to express their points of view.

My physics professor has a Swedish accent, that keeps her from pronouncing several words correctly. One word she is constantly mispronouncing is feel she says fool very distinctly or she stumbles across other words but becase she herself by her hand movements as well she's able to get the point across faster.

Techniques behind new dress or new looks depend upon culture sex and taste for music. Punk rockers are a prime example of dressing for communication. How can you tell a punk rocker? By their partially died hair or men wearing earings and the fashion leaves much to be desired.

On the other hand, professional students prominent professors and other students who believe themselves intellectuals dress very classy there are called prepies.

Christinas for the most part dress very neatly more to common social standards. These standards are just as expressive as punk rockers or preps.

We all communicate daily using hundreds of forms of communicate. If by chance we stop to recognize this, some of us might realize the simplicity and begin to utilize our language skills.

Clearly in this first attempt at putting a paper together, Student H attempts to deal with a topic that is just too broad for his abilities.
He does have a sense that he needs to give examples for his broad generalizations, but he can't tie all the examples together to focus on a coherent main point. His next sample is taken after four weeks class time in the Writing Workshop:

**Student H Week Four**

Phil, a good friend of mine, and engineering major here at the University has always shown high potential towards achieving his goal in college. He is also a very kind natured person. When I speak with the respect I show, he'll always return the same. Phil is also one of the most active people I know, he loves to bicycle, raquet ball, he also enjoys board games. His hobby is building with wood, he spends his spare time on all sorts of projects.

Everything I've seen that he has built are very impressive. These projects are usually done while he's work studying at the Art Hall woods shop. Phil, seems to me one of the most devoted people I know to his study. Socially he has helped me to better understand what to expect, and not expect out of college living, if I devoted myself to my work.

I can imagine remaining active like he does would be an advantage. My daily schedule doesn't seem as remote, but mine working out alright. I really idol his devotion; nevertheless, he tends to become a little irattic in public. I remember once we were eating at God Fathers restaurant he was definitly an embarassment by laughing aloud. He acted crazy the whole time we were there at least that's the way it looked to me. Phil is still a very nice person who will take the time to be a good friend.

Although some of his syntax is just plain disjointed, he certainly has made an improvement in narrowing and unifying his paper. He has topic sentences for each paragraph and moves between generalizations and specifics fairly easily. He does make a sophisticated pattern of contrast in sentence three which begins, "nevertheless." This is quite an advancement over his first sample taken during the first week when he shows contrast merely by placing one sentence next to the other and
making the reader fill in the contrast connection. The final writing sample taken from this student was produced in the ninth week:

Student H  Week Nine

I believe that everyone should experience natural outdoor living. To me events like camping, hiking, fishing are good learning activities. They help you unwind and understand nature a little better. Most of what I know concerning the outdoors comes from my personal experiences. A real outdoors man just don't put up a tent and fry hamburger over a kerosine stove. He usually makes traps in order to catch fresh meat. These traps are called snares which take a lot of practice to make. They are usually limbs from trees that have ropes or vines over a trigger arrangement. The snare is placed over a hole so when the animal triggers the snare he drops in the hole.

Fishing is also an easy way of getting food. Usually making a rod only takes a stick and a good thorn tree. Black locust trees' have good strong thorns and are excellent use for hooks for the fishing pole.

There are also a number of plants edible in nature, but searching for food can be hazzardus if you are not familiar with plants. The best reference book that I've found to be useful is called Peterson's a field guide to edible wild plants.

Outdoor experience in my opinion is a necessity for people to communicate with nature a little better and in the process get personal satisfaction and a deep relationship with the wild.

Student H has added new skills to his increasing ability in unity and organization. This paper shows he can describe process in a limited manner and also manage transitions between ideas in a more natural way. If we consider this student's work, which could be duplicated by other student examples many times over, we have to be impressed by the rapid progress. It is the strongest challenge to the argument that "restricted" code-users are limited to one code and cannot easily move to another.
While it is necessary to acknowledge the importance of researchers such as Bernstein and Loban, it is also vital to consider that basic code-users may share common characteristics without sharing a common socio-economic background. Once this has been established, it is necessary to investigate new areas of commonality which could explain the characteristics of the basic code-users in a less restrictive theory.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER I


3Ibid., p. 29.

4Ibid., p. 33.

5Ibid., p. 35.

6Ibid., p. 42.

7Ibid., p. 61.


9Ibid., p. 4.


11Ibid., p. 70.

12Ibid., p. 70.

13Ibid., p. 88.


15Ibid., p. 230.

16Ibid., p. 236.

17Ibid., p. 237.

18Ibid., p. 238.

19Ibid., p. 291.


22 Ibid., p. 303.

23 Ibid., p. 304.


25 Shaughnessy, pp. 230-231.

26 Ibid., p. 18.
CHAPTER II

THE PATTERN BENEATH THE PATTERN

Chapter One of this dissertation examines the composing techniques of beginning writers. Many of these techniques are easily recognizable: short, choppy syntax, disjointed transitions, additive and redundant constructions, and restricted vocabulary. There is a pattern to their composing that is apparent to their readers. Not so apparent, however, are causes for these patterns.

If we reject Bernstein's and Loban's use of class as a prime determinant of language patterns for being too restrictive; and, in some instances, contradictory, then we must seek new explanations for these patterns in order to evaluate the writing produced by beginning writers.

One method of studying the writing is to examine the "pattern beneath the pattern" or, as Shaughnessy would phrase it, the logic behind the errors.

Teachers of writing at all levels become so inured to, or perhaps complacent with the assumption that there are students who "can write" and others who "can't write" that this sharp division is often treated as a valid method to distinguish "good" from "bad" writers. "Good writers" are those who can expand on the teacher's essay prompt with assertions that are supported, deliver mechanics and spelling that are functional and correct, and present occasional personal insights into the
subject matter. Those who "can't write" refuse to use the stylistics and mechanics so diligently set forth by their grammar texts each year, and often wander from the assigned essay prompt using disjointed syntax and unconnected ramblings. In short, the form destroys the content.

Frank Smith in his book which studies composing techniques, Writing and the Writer, addresses this problem:

Composition is often discussed as if it consisted of two separate and independent parts, the generation of something to be said (variously called ideas, thoughts, meaning or content) and its expression in appropriate sequences of words. But these two aspects cannot be separated. Meaning is made manifest in its expression. We may not know an appropriate way of saying something we want to express, but until we find a way of saying it then what is to be said remains a chimera, at best a more diffuse form of image. As a manifest reflection or consequence of anything in the mind, idea and words must come into existence together.¹

To combine meaning and form in an acceptable pattern is one of the most difficult tasks a beginning writer faces. Smith indicates that part of this important task depends heavily on the planning function of language; that there is contemplation of the language prior to and after it is actually written strongly influences the textual draft. However, as many researchers of the "restricted" code-users observe in their studies, the planning function of language is either weak or absent in the language usage of these writers:

Whether the words are created as they are put onto paper or whether they are first heard in the writer's mind does not change the basic fact that the writer has no control over their arrival, except for the ultimate control of not putting them on paper or of erasing them from the paper.²

This observation by Smith would certainly apply to "standard" or "elaborated" language-users, but not to beginning writers for the most part. In situations where they must produce writing, they cannot rely on form
because they have not mastered the conventions; they do not take time to plan or revise because they are unable to distinguish "acceptable" from "unacceptable" syntax; instead, they rely only on limited, hesitant techniques to set forth their ideas as they flow and therefore have "no control over the arrival of their words." This type of writing and lack of practice with writing conventions produces the "pattern beneath the pattern" that is common to most beginning or basic writers. The following examples are taken from basic writing students' responses to placement questions from Summer Quarter 1984 and serve as excellent examples of this layering of patterns:

Prompt: Sometimes we feel a need to escape from daily problems and commitments that can seem overpowering. Select one method of escape that works for you and explain why it works so well.

STUDENT A (ACT 9)

1 To escape daily problems and commitments that can seem overpowering.
2 This is never really a problem to handle or take care of. 
3 To escape problems at home, work, or even while I'm out 
4 is to play basketball. 
5 To escape I make basketball my life. Whenever I have a 
6 problem, I go out and play basketball. 
7 Basketball is the type of activity that it make you think, 
8 work hard, an drive mental stress out of your mind. 
9 Basketball make a person think out other thing which distracts 
10 his mind off of unessarry distractions. 
11 Playing the game of basketball is hard work. It rise your 
12 legs of worrying about what going wrong. 
13 In Basketball you got to have heart. You can't do it on 
14 mind alone, you must do it from the heart.

On the surface, this is typical beginning writing: the sentences are redundant, they are choppy, and they fail to expand the primary ideas of the paragraph in any elaborated pattern. One might observe this piece to reflect a "listing" pattern rather than a "planning" pattern. There
is, however, beneath the "listing" pattern, another significant pattern at work which gives us an interesting insight into the composing process of this writer: the repetition of phrasing is used as a unifying force to tie basic ideas together. It's as if the writer cannot proceed with a new idea until the phrase "to escape" is repeated to give the writing continuity. "To escape" is used as a starting point for the first three short paragraphs and then the word "basketball" takes its place to begin the next two paragraphs. This writer backtracks each time he begins a new sentence because the repetition, from his viewpoint, keeps the writer and reader on track. Many beginning writers would not exhibit this degree of repetition; however, redundancy would occur in word choice and in structural patterns.

Prompt: We have all had relationships that have had a major impact upon our lives. Select one relationship that has been especially important to you, and explain the significance of that relationship in your life.

STUDENT B (ACT 10)

1 Relationships are a major part of ones life. Relationship-
2 ships help people establish a healthy and open personality.
3 A relationship which has a major impact upon me would be
4 the relationship that I have with a girl named Laura. This,
5 relationship contains the highest quality of sharing, caring
6 and love.
7 At first, the relationship had an different type of rela-
8 tionship which I had never experienced before. This feeling
9 was genealized at the beginning of the relationship which I
10 had never experienced before. It grew further as time
11 progressed. This relationship feeling came from and indiv-
12 idual who was searching for an element, for which could make
13 her life complete. This feeling, or quest, was felt and
14 accounted for promptly.

The word, "relationship," is used in a number of ways within this paper. It is used as both a noun and as a modifier, "relationship feeling;" it
is also used at least once in every sentence but the last one where the 
writer substitutes the word "quest" for "relationship." At one point the 
writer says "the relationship had an different type of relationship;" the 
phrase becomes meaningless, yet the writer cannot find another word to 
substitute for "relationship" without the fear of losing his train of 
thought. Once committed to the concept of the relationship guiding the 
main idea of the paper, it's as if the individual word symbolizes the 
entire concept; to give up the word is to give up the concept. In a 
spoken conversation, the writer/speaker may have eliminated the repeti­
tion that stands out so flagrantly in textual form; however, this writing 
sample shows that students often use oral forms to bolster textual forms. 
Repetition that would not seem noticeable in oral form becomes a liabil­
ity in textual form.

Both of these student examples point out that while surface pat­
terns in beginning writing papers may indicate certain obvious structur­
al patterns at the outset, we can often examine the syntax more closely 
to find another pattern with its own peculiar logic operating at yet a 
different level. More often than not, this pattern is linked to the oral 
or spoken forms of language rather than the textual or written forms.

The obvious connection of oral traits with the beginning writer is 
one that teachers of basic writers have often made: "They write like 
they speak." Mina Shaughnessy discusses the important connection be­
tween spoken dialogue and written formal English in Errors and Expecta­
tions:

If one is led by the kinds of errors that seem to dominate 
the writing of BW students, this much at least might be 
ventured: that while many of their problems with written
English are obviously linked to the accidents of transcription in an unfamiliar medium, others seem to be rooted in real differences between spoken and written sentences, differences that are exaggerated when the writer's own speech is non-standard but are there for the standard speaker as well.3

In spite of his research showing the primary connections to be between language and class, Basil Bernstein began his research because of connections made between writing and speaking. In his teaching of students at City Day College in London, groups that he would later classify as "restricted code-users," Bernstein describes his findings regarding the speaking/writing connection:

One day I took a piece of a student's continuous writing and broke it up into its constituent sentences and arranged the sentences hierarchically on the page, so that it looked like a poem. The piece took on a new and vital life. The gaps between the lines were full of meaning. I took a Bob Dylan ballad and produced a second version in which the lines were arranged continuously as in prose. . . . The space between the lines in the poetry was the listener or reader's space out of which he created a unique, unspoken, personal meaning. . . . I became fascinated by condensation; by the implicit. In my teaching I covered a range of contents and contexts, and yet, despite the variations, I felt that here was a speech form predicated upon the implicit.4

Bernstein went on from this experiment to connect this "implicit" or "restricted" code to members of the working-class. In its earliest inception, however, it was purely an oral/textual connection that stimulated his further studies.

Perhaps the most incisive comments about the link between speaking and writing are those made by Alexander Luria, the eminent Soviet neuropsychologist, in his book, Language and Cognition:

The relationship between oral and written speech can be quite interesting in the case of a person who is just beginning to learn to write and is therefore not able to use written speech with sufficient automaticity . . . the
written speech of such a person still reveals many characteristics of oral speech, but also reflects the activity of consciously learning the techniques of language needed for writing.5

While many researchers working in independent fields such as linguistics, anthropology, psycholinguistics, and basic English have made the connection between oral and textual patterns, Luria sparks the idea that there might be a class of writers that is actually suspended between the two cultures exhibiting features of both. This new classification provides an excellent basis from which to evaluate the work of beginning writers.

While Loban, Bernstein and other researchers chose to make distinctions between the "beginning writer," the "basic writer," and the "restricted writer," my observations are that these writers share many of the same composing techniques and strategies. Therefore, unless students have been designated specifically as "basic writers" (e.g., The Writing Workshop, The Ohio State University; and in Mina Shaughnessy's book, Errors and Expectations), I will refer to these writing students as "beginning writers" in the same manner that Luria does, "reflecting the activity of consciously learning the techniques of language needed for writing." Naturally there are some beginning writers who will evolve into "standard writers;" they will not produce the blatant oral patterns that purely oral-based beginning writers do. They move from the early patterns of oral speech into more elaborated patterns, they manipulate the planning function of language, and they manage the merging of form and content effectively. The writers this dissertation is concerned with, "beginning writers," are those who are truly suspended between oral and textual writing patterns.
Certainly the link between the oral and textual cultures has been made by Bernstein, Ohmann, and Loban, but they have not pursued it; rather they focused on the language/class distinctions connection. Shaughnessy devotes considerable attention to the oral/textual connection and credits many basic writing errors to the fact that these students cannot make the transition between the two cultures easily. Luria's theory that beginning writers exhibit oral traits along with consciously-learned writing techniques in their composing patterns is an excellent guideline for studying the writing of beginning writers. Rather than basing our studies on class distinctions, the focus will be on the oral/textual patterns produced by these writers. Oral and textual patterns are the primary traits that consistently cut across social and class lines to appear as distinguishing factors in beginning writers' work. Therefore, it is on these two patterns that this dissertation will discuss the composing styles of beginning writers.

It is also essential to include in a study of these patterns the importance of the influence of each of the cultures. Too often in composition classes teachers have implied that writing which reflects too much orality is unacceptable. If we explore the new classification of the beginning writer as one which contains both oral and textual traits, it is essential to focus on the advantages and disadvantages of this combination to the final efforts of the writer.

Several writers have considered the link between oral and textual cultures but one of the most insightful and comprehensive studies of oral and textual cultures is Walter Ong's book, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. Published in 1982, this book is at one level
the study of consciousness and its influence on both the spoken and the written word. At a different level, it celebrates the glories of the past culture of orality which produced the power and action of "the sounded word."

To examine this study of oral and textual cultures more closely, it is important to understand the context of Ong's terms. "Orality" existed as a primary form of communication and a determinant in structuring societies until "literacy" emerged in limited circles only 6,000 years ago. Writing eventually introduced a later stage, printing, which Ong refers to as "the electronic processing of the word." The orality which Ong discusses is "primary orality," and is attributed to those totally unfamiliar with writing. Ong makes this distinction between this form of oral culture and that of an oral society which is familiar with both reading and writing. While all of these evolutions in language-use, from oral to textual to electronic, produced great social and cultural changes, Ong does not develop theories about these areas; instead, he investigates the differences in "mentality" between oral and textual cultures.

Ong stresses that orality is important because the character of language is essentially oral; language exists basically as something we hear, something we need to translate into other forms such as textuality. Any written text must depend on orality for meaning; therefore, in a large sense, writing is the dependent discipline of the two. Ong describes this phenomenon thus:

... written texts all have to be related somehow, directly or indirectly to sound, the natural habitat of language, to yield their meanings. Reading a text means converting
it to sound, aloud, or in the imagination, syllable-by-syllable in slow reading or sketchily in the rapid reading common to high-technology cultures. Writing can never dispense with orality.  

Although writing depends upon oral patterns, Ong stresses that language study in recent decades has centered around written texts because of the relationship of study to writing:

All thought, including that in primary oral cultures, is to some degree analytic: it breaks its materials into various components. But abstractly sequential, classificatory explanatory examination of phenomena or of stated truths is impossible without writing and reading. Human beings in primary oral cultures, those untouched by writing in any form, learn a great deal and possess and practice great wisdom but they do not 'study'.

This fascination with oral forms has been a continuous one, in part because of the repetition involved in its patterns. Ong believes oral cultures do not learn by "study" but rather by observations, apprenticeships which allow individuals to repeat what they hear because it is uttered so frequently in the same manner. Student "A's" paper at the beginning of this chapter is an excellent example of writing which is based on oral patterns; the selection and repetition of words is used to jog the memory into developing the main idea. Ong relates that in an oral culture, knowledge, once formulated, had to be forever repeated lest it be lost. He cites the works of the Greek poet Homer as perfect examples of the formulaic style of an oral tradition, but remarks that by Plato's time, the Greeks had interiorized writing. At that point, knowledge was not preserved in formulas, but in written text. The functions of repetition and redundancy were no longer necessary to preserve a thought linguistically; there was a new freedom to create more original,
abstract thought unfettered by clusters of words used as symbols to represent abstract ideas.

Oral traditions do not merely fade away with the advent of writing, however. Ong stresses that

oral formulaic thought and expression ride deep in consciousness and unconscious and . . . only very gradually does writing become composition in writing, a kind of discourse-poetic or otherwise—that is put together without a feeling that the one writing is actually speaking aloud.8

I strongly suspect that in the case of beginning writers, they indeed do not divorce themselves from the feeling that the "one writing is the one speaking." This following excerpt taken from a basic writer's composition illustrates this pattern clearly:

STUDENT C

1 Most Americans place a very high priority on being independent
2 and you know there are many ways kids are forced to do these
3 things. Things like when they are sucking their thumb, don't
4 be a baby, be different, don't suck your thumb. Mom and dad
5 told me that until I was 8 years old because all the other
6 kids weren't sucking thumbs anymore. Another way is bed-
7 wetting, don't do that look at all the other kids, their not
8 babies like you are. Parents also try to take blankets away
9 and you know how hard that is. You know it looks dumb.

This sample exemplifies what Luria means by new writers displaying "the self-conscious act of writing" because the security and dynamics or oral dialogic interaction linger in the written text. To get the full meaning from the text, the reader must pause between the ideas the writer presents and ask questions as if it were conversational, not textual. It is also very interesting to notice the use of the pronoun, "you." Often oral-based writers use "you" in a conversational tone with an implied audience as if a spoken dialogue were taking place. In Student
"C's" sample, "you" also refers to the writer as the object of another's conversation. This would not be as confusing if it were presented in speech rather than writing, for the voice intonation would clarify the usage of "you" in the respective instances.

Ong refers to writing like this sample as reflective of "oral-style thinking;" you know what you can recall. The thought processes involved in an oral culture rely on rhythmic aids, much like the ones in Student "A's" paper. One must think in patterns shaped for recurrence; once remembered, they in turn are written as formulaic patterns. Thought does not consist outside of patterns; they are one and the same. As Ong reasons, the oral patterns form the substance of the thought itself. "Thought in any extended form is impossible without them, for it consists in them." In an oral culture, experience is gathered in formulas and is processed in the same way.

Another specific characteristic of the oral culture pattern is its additive nature; the speaker processes words as thoughts occur. The textual pattern is one which illustrates more planning and uses more elaborate and fixed grammar. This additive pattern in writing results in syntax that is tiresome and difficult to read as exemplified by the compositions of students "D" and "E."

STUDENT D

If I hadnt come to OSU this quarter i feel i would have got a job because i needed something to occupy my time. If I hadnt come to OSU this quarter i wouldnt get started on my degree. I came to OSU and it has the best school of journalism. I came to OSU because it has a nice size campus. I'm glad i chose to come to OSU this quarter because i know that if i had gotten a job it would have been a long time before i thougt about coming to OSU.
STUDENT E

Upon my coming to OSU I wrote to some other college whom I wrote because I was interested in them and I was really looking to be interested in leaving home. After I wrote to OSU and they sent me information I said to my parents that the school for me and I was interested in going far from home but now I'm kind of homesick.

The sentences in both student sample "D" and "E" are spun out as each individual thought joins another; this additive style encompasses redundancy and repetition and illustrates the difficulties beginning students encounter as they attempt to develop even the most elementary ideas.

Part of the difficulty may be that beginning writers are not as adept at articulating self-analysis because of their oral cultural patterns as most standard writers may be:

... an oral culture simply does not deal in such items as geometric figures, abstract categorization, formally logical reasoning processes, definitions, or even comprehensive descriptions, or articulated self-analysis, all of which derive not simply from thought itself but from text-formed thought.¹⁰

Ong is not insinuating that oral thought is illogical or that it is simplistic; rather, that oral cultures cannot organize thoughts in a linear way without having them appear aggregative rather than analytic:

... Writing has to be personally interiorized to affect thinking processes. Persons who have interiorized writing not only write but also speak literately, which is to say that they organize, to varying degrees, even their oral expression in thought patterns and verbal patterns that they would not know of unless they could write.¹¹

What Ong is stressing is that writing produces thinking patterns that are not familiar to oral cultures. Oral cultures are perfectly capable of producing complex thoughts, but they will be processed in an entirely different form than those of textual cultures. Ong refers to the
investigative work of Milman Parry and Albert Lord into the nature of verbal memory in primary oral cultures. Basically they used the structures of the Homeric poems as a base of study and concluded that the metrically tailored formulas of the works controlled the compositions. Lord also found that learning to read and write was often a handicap to the oral poet:

... it introduces into his mind the concept of a text as controlling the narrative and thereby interferes with the oral composing processes, which have nothing to do with texts but are 'the remembrance of songs sung.'

Ong discusses additional concepts which are more familiar to textual cultures than oral cultures such as the consideration of individual words representing ideas apart from an entire flow of thought. This concept often presents itself in beginning writing in peculiar syntactic ways:

STUDENT F

Throughout our day of living, there are certain advertisements which appear on the television that makes the consumer turn off their interest as to be turned on. Some products neglect reality and are therefore nonsense. During a commercial break, we often view an advertisement about mouthwash. The concept of the product is realistic but the way it is brought to us finds the commercial nonrealistic. For my first point, I would like not to carry a brand new bottle of mouthwash in my purse. I can easily judge that the bottle will occupy much space and naturally shatter. Whereas carrying an aerosol breath freshener will do fine. As a result this scene marks in a non-realistic aspect of today's living.

Certainly this student would not relate her ideas orally in this stilted manner, yet her writing attempts to imitate formal textual style with diction that simply has no meaning when it is abstracted from context. This student relies on the "flow of thought" to carry her intended meaning and therefore disregards individual words. She is familiar with a
textual style and her language attempts to come close to it without actually including individual words that hold syntactic meanings.

Another variation on this theme is the student who has some knowledge of a textual structure, but uses totally garbled diction so that we must rely on the syntax to interpret meaning:

STUDENT G

Questions that I ask in class pertaining to biology, the professor's actions become very negative. He replication to me by saying so the reading assignments. I always do my reading assignments. Sometimes I become very apprehend with the professor. . . . Finally, he has lost my final. It was his error that he has lost my final. Fortunately, I requested to retake the same final exam. Nevertheless, he submitted to me a much great deal sufficiency complicated final. This decision was unfair. I am a very outstanding student and I take my education seriously. This professor should be discharge from St. John School for the reasons of his misconduct behavior in class. My behavior have been premature however I would like to have the opportunity to be acceptance back into St. John's.

I have learned so much by this misfortune incident. Your advice and decision would be very appreciate.

No student who was familiar with both speaking and writing would ever present these thoughts in this form orally. She would be aware that it didn't make sense and also that some of the verb and noun endings were incorrect. And yet, sentences flow somewhat coherently in this piece from one to the other; and, when I presented this paper to students in my basic writing class, they had no problems deciphering the intended meanings. This student is a perfect example of a writer who is caught between the cultures of orality and textuality; she comprehends she must submit to a required form for writing, but she lacks the personal informal language patterns to accomplish it. Therefore, she uses
half-remembered words suitable for formal diction and attempts an over-elaborated style instead. Her implicit reasoning behind this style is that she is capable of using the language of "an outstanding student," in fact, the language which approximates that of her textbooks. She is relying on parts of words such as "apprehend" and "acceptance" to fill in her intended meanings while she concentrates on form rather than content. Endings of words may be mangled, but she does use the words in the proper grammatical context in most instances. However, the language which flows unconsciously in oral speech becomes labored and unnatural in written speech for the oral-based writer.

These last two writing samples are outward manifestations of some complex cognitive actions which cause difficulties for the oral-based beginning writer. Luria states that written speech differs from oral speech both in its origin and psychological structure. Obviously written speech demands conscious analysis of grammar, syntax and lexical choices; it also pushes the writer to consciously clarify his/her thoughts. Writing, Ong states, forces the mind into a "slowed down pattern." While redundancy is more natural to oral patterns of discourse, textuality forces the writer to reconsider and revise natural speech patterns into unfamiliar forms. Many standard writers learn how to do this revision effectively through practice, but beginning writers produce textual patterns that reflect both the redundancy of orality and the strained attempts of formal, unnatural diction.

An interesting parallel in the ideas of Bernstein and Ong occurs in their discussions of the oral culture's need to maintain close identification with "the known world." Bernstein translates this idea into the
pragmatic theory that "restricted code-users" share codes and intended meanings in common. They assume that their code is commonly understood and therefore requires no elaboration. They rely on this commonality to let non-verbal actions help carry their intended message. Ong points out the difficulties writing can present to this subjective use of the language:

For an oral culture learning or knowing means achieving close, empathetic, communal identification with the known. . . . Writing separates the knower from the known and thus sets up conditions for 'objectivity,' in the sense of personal disengagement or distancing.13

The task of "distancing" is extremely difficult for a beginning writer. Sometimes the only protection these writers maintain is the illusion that the reader shares the intended meanings of their work. In addition, when beginning writers acknowledge that elaboration of style is necessary, new questions assail them involving the problems of objectivity within a text: "How much do I need to tell the reader?" "How much does the reader already know?" "Is the person reading my work like me or unlike me?" "How much can I trust the reader?" Invariably, when beginning writers distance themselves from "the known world," questions of audience arise; orality presumes a shared, known audience, but textuality requires the individual writer to settle many unknown questions about audience prior to writing. There are too many uncertainties inherent in this distancing process for basic writers not to feel somewhat suspicious and alienated. Often these feelings are manifested in a prose style such as students "F" and "G" display. It is easier to hide behind an imitative "textbook formal" style than restructure their natural oral patterns to fit individual or elaborative situations.
Another byproduct of situational, "known world" frames of reference is that they reflect a form of thought that deals less with abstractions than some other cultures:

All conceptual thinking is to a degree abstract . . . the term we apply to the individual object is in itself abstract. Nevertheless, if all conceptual thinking is thus to some degree abstract, some users of concepts are more abstract than other users. Oral cultures tend to use concepts in situational, operational frames of reference that are minimally abstract in the sense that they remain close to the living human life world.14

In a situation where basic writers have a passing knowledge of what a written composition looks like, but they retain the organizational thought patterns of an oral culture which don't elaborate on abstractions, a written pattern emerges which is long on generalizations and short on organized, analytic supporting statements:

Prompt: Your knowledge of where you grew up has led you to form definite opinions about that place. Explain the advantages or disadvantages about growing up where you lived.

STUDENT H

1 In every person's minds there are substantial and definite opinions about their knowledge coming from their surroundings. There could be disadvantages or advantages in living in a small city compared to living in a large city when it concerns the knowledge and opinions you learn there. There are many disadvantages in coming from a small city. The knowledge of certain routines in a person's life are hard to change. Therefore, a large city requires changing a whole lifestyle. When I moved to a large city in my teens I had to change my entire life. In conclusion there are various disadvantages in living in a small city when it comes to a person's knowledge or opinions about that place. They aren't experienced enough to handle many different forms of situations. I feel I have a definite opinion about small city life and large city life and to be frankly honest I like large city life better.
The interesting point about this student's work is that it is relatively sophisticated syntactically; the sentences are varied and well-balanced and there are few mechanical errors. This student might have achieved fairly good grades in high school by using generalities because her style of writing reflects an ability to answer questions at the conclusions of chapters in textbooks. If there are ten questions to be answered for the evening's homework assignment, no one question is going to be focused on in depth; rather, the questions can be answered in a surface manner which imitates a specific response. In one sense, a writer of this caliber successfully masks some of her oral patterns until she reaches a writing situation, such as this placement examination, which requires her to elaborate on her abstractions and then she is unable to do so. The closest Student "H" comes to elaboration is her phrase, "When I moved to a large city in my teens I had to change my entire life." For standard writers this phrase is a natural lead into examples of how and why life changed, but for a beginning writer causal relationships slow the writing process down, elaboration requires a form of organization unfamiliar to oral thought patterns, and it becomes easier to fill the page with abstractions and take a chance on the unknown audience filling in the gaps.

The element of chance seems to replace the "planning function" of language in most instances for beginning writers. Ong partially explains the difference between planning and chance by a comparison of oral and textual cultures:

Thought requires some sort of continuity. Writing establishes in the text a 'line' of continuity outside the mind. If distraction confuses or obliterates from the mind the context out of which emerges the material I am now reading, the context can be retrieved by glancing back over the text
selectively. Backlooping can be entirely occasional, purely
ad hoc. The mind concentrates its own energies on moving
ahead because what it backloops into lies quiescent outside
itself, always available piecemeal on the inscribed page.
In oral discourse the situation is different. There is
nothing to backloop into outside the mind, for the oral
utterance has vanished as soon as it is uttered. Hence the
mind must move ahead more slowly, keeping close to the focus
of attention much of what it has already dealt with. Re-
dundancy, repetition of the just-said, keeps both speaker
and hearer surely on the track.15

Those beginning writers who, as Luria implies, use language that lies
between oral and textual cultures may not perform the textual activity
of "backlooping" or "planning" which Ong describes. Instead, they rely
on a continuous flow of words, in an oral pattern, which they hope will
convey their intended meaning. If beginning writers do not attempt the
backlooping process as they compose, they miss two important processes
that most standard writers complete: first, students read for the com-
prehension of what has already been written; secondly, they evaluate
this completed work in terms of how to continue the paper (e.g., what
supporting evidence, facts, examples need to be added to further develop
the paper). James Moffett stresses that all writing begins as inner
speech, a kind of stream of consciousness in the mind that is edited
when we actually perform the act of writing. He describes writing as a
continual revising process, a re-working of inner speech whereby the
writer reaches into his stream of consciousness, focuses on the material
he wants to use, and then writes it for an audience. The writer, says
Moffett is always "converting chaos into cosmos."16

If we consider backlooping, or re-reading writing while composing
to be a process of mental revision, then writers who apply re-reading in
their work are continuously evaluating and revising all available
material in their streams of consciousness for each writing situation. In a very real sense, backlooping or re-reading can make the difference between "chaos and cosmos."

Since Ong and Smith both discuss the importance of this planning function of backlooping for writers, it is important to introduce the results of a study I conducted and published in 1981 using basic writing students in the Writing Workshop at The Ohio State University as subjects. This study, "The Importance of Re-Reading Writing" published in The Language Arts Bulletin, Fall 1982, examined the differences between writers who did re-read writing as they wrote and those who did not.

In order to study the planning function involved in re-reading writing, I studied sixteen basic writers who had just completed the lowest level writing course in The Writing Workshop. These students in this class were recommended by their teachers on the basis that they had great difficulties developing their writing. Although this difficulty manifested itself in different textual styles in the individual writing techniques, they seemed likely subjects to test my theories of re-reading because of the overall difficulty of writing development each experienced.

I assumed prior to the ten week study that three major questions would prove to be the focus of my work:

1. How is re-reading tied to development in the writing process?

2. How can re-reading techniques be introduced to improve writing development?

3. How do "basic" writers differ in this "backlooping" technique and how does it affect their writing?
Obviously, the third question holds the most pertinent information since this chapter is concerned with the patterns which emerge when beginning writers fail to include planning functions in their writing techniques.

When I initially questioned my special study group of sixteen students about the practice of "backlooping," or "re-reading while writing," only five of the sixteen admitted they used any type of re-reading at all. Not only that, eleven of the sixteen said they actually put the writing process from their minds. Their responses to the question on the preliminary evaluation sheet, "When you pause while you are writing, what do you do?" included the following:

5 students: "look around the room; take a break from thinking."
3 students: "stop to clear my mind"
2 students: "think about other things." "think what I want to do."
2 students: "think about what else I could say."
3 students: "look over my work."
1 student: "nothing."^18

It is interesting that the five students who indicated some type of backlooping process also stated that this did not make it easier to write their papers.

The students from this test class exhibited many of the same characteristics already attributed to beginning writers. For example, the following paragraph was written by one of the five students who said they did not use any backlooping techniques:
STUDENT I

Many Americans spend hours watching television. Sports gives people the need for competition in life. Routine can make people have a lot of built-up energy. It's good to scream and yell at a football game.

The original intention of this student was to write a paper about sports on television. He began with this intent, but since he wrote one sentence down after another without backlooping and making connections, his writing constantly got away from him. The reader is left to fill in the assumptions and the writer is left frustrated and unable to develop the paper. Another common symptom of the writer who does not backloop is the inability to develop generalizations:

STUDENT J

Women are hampered in our society and it becomes a big handicap for them. Sexual discrimination hampers women in many ways. Women who are sexually discriminated against can't move up in society. Society isn't fair to both sexes because it discriminates against women.

This paragraph proceeds as if the student were stuck in mud. He can't move beyond the generalizations to develop the paper further, and his circular syntax is consigned to the same vocabulary. This student is the one who responded, "nothing" to the questionnaire. This paragraph is also similar to the student sample in Chapter One of the girl who made six starts in the placement exam. Perhaps since it was an examination situation, she did pause to re-read and realized that she was not able to develop her generalizations as she wished.

After working with this class for ten weeks using re-reading techniques, at first artificial (e.g., calling out "re-read" at intervals)
and then more casual (e.g., developing stories in class where members had to review details already given and then add on their own), all sixteen members were performing some type of backlooping function at the conclusion of the quarter. While the overall writing level did not improve at astonishing rates, students were able to make better connections with their generalizations as evidenced by final paragraphs of writers "I" and "J":

STUDENT I (2nd paragraph)

The job outlook for everybody is very bleak. People with skills can not find jobs, even college graduates have a tough time finding a job. A few ways to get a job in this economy are to become qualified in a field that is growing and be flexible enough to change fields or location. It also helps to be reliable.

While this student still shows a tendency to overuse the same vocabulary, as well as circular argumentation, he also demonstrates that he no longer begins a paper at point "A" and winds up at point "Z." Student "J" also became a faithful re-reader and was able to progress:

STUDENT J (2nd paragraph)

It's difficult to determine what is the first turning point in becoming an adult. Sometimes it simply means taking on responsibility. A job commitment can become a great learning and growing experience in many ways. One summer I decided to set up a painting business to learn more about business, and how to make money. I organized my materials, then with the money I earned I bought a thirty foot extension ladder and brushes, and then began to show. For example, an estimate on a house which was too low cost me money on the job. I found out that one must have in writing the work that has to be done for the agreed upon price.
While there are still some problems with the writing, this student has now progressed to a point where he can move rather easily from generalizations to specifics and keep coherence and unity well in mind.

While this was a study to reconstruct the relationships between re-reading and development in writing, it contains implications for the current investigation of beginning writers. We need to be aware that we cannot assume beginning writers perform all the functions of standard writers. When colleagues in The Writing Workshop asked their basic writing students if they performed the backlooping function of re-reading, the overwhelming response was negative. We often teach from the assumption that beginning writers cannot perform writing techniques well; often it is because they do not perform the functions at all.

This study also reinforces Shaughnessy's feeling that it is practice basic writers need, not an assault on their cognitive abilities.

Lev Vygotsky, the Russian cognitive psychologist, offers an interesting contrast between oral and written communication in terms of the cognitive processes required of each. He makes the usual acknowledgment that oral communication takes place in an environment rich with external clues and non-verbal actions. Written communication, however, has only the text itself for interpretation. Vygotsky feels that the shift from an oral to a written form of communication is a cognitive developmental process by which a writer moves from compact "inner speech" to maximally elaborated written speech:

Communication depends on the writer's awareness of what is shared with the intended audience and what must be explained. Thus, to write well a social as well as a linguistic analysis is necessary: one must master linguistic forms
and understand the relation of one's own perspective to that of others.19

This movement from inner-self, more of an oral form of communication, to an awareness and analysis of others is usually too large a task for beginning writers to accomplish simultaneously. Instead, as demonstrated in this chapter, they manifest a combination of oral and textual language with little evidence of analysis.

This concept of limited or shared audience appears frequently when discussing orality. In many instances, it has been linked to specific language-users, such as speakers of Vernacular Black English. A study conducted by Marcia Farr and Mary Ann Janda of The University of Illinois at Chicago Circle was recently published in Research in the Teaching of English, February 1985. Their study was concerned with the relationship between writing difficulties and the carry over of inappropriate oral expressions from speakers of Vernacular Black English. The actual study investigated the relationship between the oral and written language of one college-level speaker of VBE in order to investigate whether the use of oral, or the lack of literate, features account for problems in writing, and the nature of other, as yet unidentified features or orality and literacy.20

The study focused on the crossovers, the use of oral features in writing and literate features in speech, in an attempt to partially explain the difficulties of students in remedial writing classes. Farr and Janda state "... nonstandard varieties of English, or of any language, are as complex and as regularly patterned as are standard varieties."21 Again, we find the complexity of patterns beneath patterns when the nonstandard patterns are integrated into the existing standard models.
The rationale for the examination of both oral and written language in this study is that language should be viewed holistically, that "... for those who are not yet skilled writers (whether in elementary school or in college) most of the linguistic capacities on which they rely are orally-based." In fact, the importance of how the language is actually used is of more significance to these researchers than whether the language is oral or written.

The data provided for the Farr/Janda study was collected from the oral and written language of a Black, eighteen-year old writing student, Joseph, who attended basic writing classes at the University of Illinois, Chicago. His problems which kept him from writing effectively included: word choice, spelling, punctuation, sentence organization and standard English grammar. All of these would constitute the major problems of any basic writing student, not necessarily just those of a speaker of VBE.

The authors mention that a frequent characteristic of Joseph's writing was the truncated formal quality which he used to fill an appropriate form rather than attempt a coherent elaborated textual pattern which would be more suitable for his intended meaning. An entry from his dialogue journal illustrates this pattern:

People should not smoke for three reasons, and in this passage I will focus on all three. First of all people should not smoke because it is fatal. The reason for this statement is because smoking is the main cause of lung cancer. . . . Marriages don't work, families cannot function, friends lose all respect for the person who smokes. . . it ruins the fresh air. It makes public places smell bad like restaurants, washrooms, airplanes, movie theaters, etc. It ruins the smell of your cologne. In conclusion, I have given you 3 sound reasons why people shouldn't smoke. They
are Death, Destruction and Odor now you know, and furthermore I think people who smoke are total losers.\textsuperscript{22}

The authors stress that Joseph's writing is attempting to satisfy certain structural criteria, and in the process, he is ignoring the communicative function of writing. He does not attempt to connect the three ideas he mentions, and the generalizations he states (e.g., "I think people who smoke are total losers"), are primarily unelaborated. The problem with his writing is not that the grammar is incorrect, or the usage nonstandard; the problem is that Joseph, like writers "F" and "G" in this chapter, has not created a coherent, elaborated writing style to convey his meanings. The problems with Joseph's writing are not linked to his usage of VBE and could be duplicated by other beginning writers who are standard dialect-users:

STUDENT K

This year I have made a resolution to apply myself in all of my classwork. I often find myself not really putting full effort in my classwork. I have come to realize that I have a problem with writing papers, because I have a problem with obtaining and organizing my ideas. I hope during this course I will eliminate those two problems. I also realize that in order to maintain the required academic standardizing I have to set goals. One: apply to myself more. Two: apply to my goals myself. Three: apply some rules to my goals.

This writer's style approximates Joseph's; it sets up the stilted format whereby the student lists a series of unelaborated ideas. Like Joseph, student "K" from the Writing Workshop uses numbers to illustrate to his readers that he is making important points that may be itemized. Student "K" also uses language in a formal, textbook manner; words such as "obtaining," "organizing," and "standardizing," would probably not be
part of his oral vocabulary and would seldom be included in his writing outside of a classroom setting.

Extending the research beyond Joseph's written language to his oral language provided some of the most interesting results of the Illinois study. His oral language was tape recorded in an informal interview to reasonably approximate how his language was actually used. The interviewer pursued topics in which Joseph was most interested, and transcribed his interview consisted of 3,021 words. This added to his written language which included everything he wrote in a ten week basic writing class provided a range of language which included oral dialogue, written dialogue, and written expository monologue. The data was analyzed in several ways. Joseph's oral and written language was examined for characteristic features of VBE to determine which of these occurred most frequently in his speech and to what extent they affected his writing. While the researchers considered Joseph a speaker of VBE, they also agreed that his linguistic repertoire included features of standard English as well:

... dialects are not in reality self-contained, isolated language systems; they are varieties of a language which are socially and regionally recognizable as distinct from one another in some respects. This is, dialects are generalized groupings of the variation that exists in a language.23

A second method of analyzing the data was to explore Joseph's language for "oral" and "literate" features to discover if his problems in writing were caused by the use of these features in inappropriate modes. While Joseph's speech and writing exhibited many conventional characteristics of oral and written English, the study did not find a predominant use of oral features in his written work. Nor, was there a lack of
"literate" features in his writing. In fact,

... the discourse structure of Joseph's oral language is strikingly parallel to the organization taught in most composition texts for paragraph structure: topic sentence, ... supporting sentences, and concluding sentence which 'wraps up' the paragraph.24

Because of the topic-centered discourse patterns of Joseph's oral language, Farr and Janda concluded his problems in writing were not due to the lack of a literate style of discourse organization. Because VBE features were infrequently introduced in his writing and his style included many devices typical of standard written English, they eliminated his VBE oral features as a major cause of difficulties in his writing. One of their conclusions is worth noting since it reflects the opinions of several of the researchers already mentioned in this dissertation:

... spoken and written language exist on a continuum on which the frequencies of features regularly increase or decrease from one end of the continuum to the other... written language is produced at a much slower pace than spoken language, it tends to be more integrated through the use of such features as nominalization, relative clauses and series. Those features, in contrast, which characterize either involvement or detachment seem to have nothing to do with real time processing constraints. That is, speakers tend to reflect more personal involvement through the use of such features as first person reference, references to mental processes, and so forth. Writers, however, tend to reflect more detachment by using a feature such as the passive voice.25

The concept of the continuum is one that may be linked to Luria's description of beginning writers as those who reflect the characteristics of both the oral and textual cultures; the problem lies not in dialects being confused with writing, but in the failure to recognize existing patterns at either end of the continuum which have not merged effectively.
While Farr and Janda conclude that Joseph's VBE is not the major cause of his writing problems, they do concede that the "oral" patterns in his writing show he may have learned the lessons of form at the expense of other qualities of writing. His writing does not appear to be language that was generated by a human being in an attempt to express or create meaning. The form is there: the functional attempt to communicate does not seem to be . . . for example, the use of terse, unelaborated statements can be seen as an oral feature of language, similar to utterances from one speaker in a conversation. Research is needed to explore this and other possibilities which relate the overlapping use of oral and literate features in samples of oral and written language. We have eliminated as explanations for problems in Joseph's writing only those features of orality and literacy which previous research has defined. We may yet identify unexplored features of orality which students do use inappropriately in writing.  

The Farr/Janda study eliminates the influence of one specific dialect on the written language of one individual writer. Perhaps, in a sense, the study of one basic writer appears too individualized to make extensive generalizations; yet, it might be compared to Peter Owens' limited study of five sections of basic and standard writers wherein he contradicts Bernstein's theory of class and language connections. Undoubtedly the Illinois study and the Owens study could be duplicated many times over. However, even if these two studies are regarded only as limited investigations, they still serve as challenges to existing opinions that class and racial dialects are the major factors influencing beginning writers. They also strengthen the theory of this dissertation that beginning writers are much less influenced by outside factors such as dialects, class, and racial factors than they are by oral and textual patterns of composing.
One other outside factor that often emerges as an influence on writing is developmental ability in terms of age. According to some theories, writers who exhibit oral patterns do so primarily because their age limits their composing skills. Based on this assumption, beginning writers will improve their skills naturally as they grow older and become more familiar with standard composing techniques. This is an important argument because in an overall sense, if all writers improved with age, we would not have distinctive levels of writers such as "basic" and "standard." The age factor does not account for beginning writers who essentially maintain the same writing style from elementary school until they enter a remedial writing program in college. Neither does it account for students at a much younger age performing more expertly at writing tasks than students who are older, thus theoretically more practiced.

Several examples illustrating the influence of age on writing abilities can be compared in some examples taken from the Columbus Public Schools' Early English College Assessment Program. This is a holistic grading program wherein students from grades 10, 11, and 12 from all the high schools in Columbus produce a writing sample in response to a single essay prompt. After the sample has been holistically graded, receiving the same score from at least two graders, students are given a report informing them in accordance with their current writing abilities where they would "place" in writing courses at the Ohio State University. This allows the students opportunity to work on their skills before graduating from high school and theoretically lowers the numbers of students who must take remedial writing courses. As a holistic grader at the
Winter 1984 and 1985 sessions, I was extremely interested in the great range of writing abilities demonstrated by these high school students. This 1985 Winter grading session was of particular significance since the essay prompt used for the high school students was the same prompt used in the 1984 Summer Placement Program for basic writers: "Sometimes we feel a need to escape from daily problems and commitments that can seem overpowering. Select one method of escape that works for you, and explain why it works so well." The following sample was submitted by a twelfth grade student:

SAMPLE 1

I go up stairs and shut my door, and lay on my bed then I turn on my music usually I'll all ready have in a nice slow tape that slowly calmes my nerves down. When I am feeling a little upset. Then I lay there and think about all the things that went wrong in my day that weren't suppose to happen. The reason why I do this so that these things won't occur tomorrow.

I feel that it helps everyone to just get away from everybody. It help you to escape from everything. Sometimes you just want to run away. So me myself it help me just go my room and think about myself instead of everyone else feelings its about I think about my own. So this is why I go to my room and think about myself, my feeling and my way of life even if know one else likes it.

This sample represents the work of two sessions: one hour session to write the first draft, and another hour session to revise it. There are only eight sentences produced and those restate the same idea without any significant elaboration. This student exhibits the same beginning patterns of those students in basic writing classes at Ohio State University. In contrast to this student, Sample 2 represents the work of an eleventh grader:
Occasionally, when I arrive home from school, I just want to release all of the tensions and anxieties I may have acquired. There are several methods that I use: Working on my Apple Computer, calling a girl or a friend, watching television, or maybe must letting the ebb of a song's beat on the radio undulate through me until my body is in rhythm with the beat. All of those things are effective, but my main method is more consistent. It consists of a work-out and a study period, or vice-versa. The mood I'm in and the way I feel decides the order.

Let's say that a good friend and I had a major dispute. I'll come home, and immediately I go up and change clothes. Thinking about the incident all through this procedure, I attempt to increment the level of my anger and my energy. After this is completed, I stomp down to the basement, tensing my facial muscles to the point of cramping. This releases some stress, but the main part of the work-out is weightlifting.

I usually have already set the weight on the bar, so immediately after doing calisthenics, I lie down on the bench to do some presses. I relax all over until I grip the bar, and then, GRRRR! I suddenly release a flurry of energy, yanking the bar off it's post. I bench press until exhaustion. Then I start again, repeating this procedure until sweat droplets glimmer down my face, chest and arms. Then I stop. I can feel a slight pulsation in my triceps, the blood circulating through until it reaches my fingertips, where the pulse continues and slowly recedes until it has vanished from detection.

There are two more paragraphs in this essay, but this sample is of sufficient length to note the extraordinary detail the student uses in his descriptions; the vocabulary is varied and rich and the words selected for the specific purpose of enhancing the writer's image rather than impressing the reader. The organization is excellent and the sentence variety sophisticated and effective. The writer has a personal voice and at one point includes the reader by using, "Let's say that a good friend and I had a major dispute." Compare this to a more oral-based writer who would surely engage the reader with "You know" at some point
in the essay. The length of an essay does not necessarily determine whether or not the writer has composing problems. Sample 3 is also written by an eleventh grade student who is able to make significant connections without producing the length and complexity of that in Sample 2:

SAMPLE 3

We all must face problems in our lives. We each have some way of escaping our problems. My personal means of escape is thought. I choose thinking my problems out as an escape because running away from them does not solve them, it only makes them worse. Thought works best for me because it allows me to resolve my problems, and gradually escape them at the same time.

Deep thinking is my most effective short-term panacea. When difficult situations begin to crowd my life the solitude of my mind is the best escape. I analyze my problems and concentrate on possible solutions. After a while of complex thought, my mind begins to weary of the subject at hand, and I associate present thoughts with pleasant thoughts of past events. Soon my present problems are pushed aside and my thoughts are dominated by the thoughts of past events. Thus, my escape has been made, and the solutions that were pushed aside are stored in my mind until it is once more time to face reality.

While this sample is much shorter and the vocabulary less complex, the writer does explain the process of escape well and shows a good level of analysis of his method and how it works for him. When we read this essay, we are aware of the writer as a person and associate a good level of maturity with him. In both Samples 2 and 3, the transitions between ideas are excellent and the essays progress with purpose. The sense of purpose is often replaced by the need to create form at the expense of purpose for most beginning writers; this is exhibited by the twelfth grade writer of Sample 4:
Sometime I feel a need to escape from daily problems and commitments. The method of escape that works for me is reading in my bedroom or just being in the privacy of my bedroom or just being in the privacy of my bedroom. There are three reasons why this method works for me. It gives me privacy, time to think, and it is something I enjoy doing.

When you have a big family like mine, you need a little privacy. A big family can be very nerve racking. Going to my room gives me privacy and freedom from them all. This method gives me time to be alone and time off from my family. It gives me privacy.

Escaping to my room gives me time to think. It gives me time to think about my problems. After thinking about these problems they don't seem as bad as before. It also gives me time to think about myself and not about other things or people. It is also a way of relaxation.

Escaping to my room to read is another way to relax. Reading takes me into a fantasy world and away from reality. It is also something I enjoy. Doing something I enjoy helps me to relax.

My method of escape works to sell because it releases me from all the burdens of life. It also gives me things I have a need for. such as privacy, time to think, and time to relax.

The repetition and redundancy of thought and language in this essay qualify it for oral traits. The writer even repeats herself in paragraph one without being aware of it during her revision. The formulaic method of repeating ideas to reinforce intended meaning is oral-based; also, the repetition is used to keep the writer and reader on track without the use of transitions. While she has confined her writing to the form of a five-paragraph theme, there is little progression in the essay and we have no sense of the writer as a person.
It is interesting to compare the following two essay samples written by entering basic Ohio State freshmen writers responding to the same prompt with those of the high school students:

SAMPLE 5

Sometimes I feel like I need to get a way, like when my parents get on me for some reasons. You know, like lets say there is a girl I like and she may talk to me but she don't like me enough to think of me as nothing more than a friend.

When this happens pressure just builds you know so that I feel I'll go made if I don't releave the pressure.

The best way I found to get come down and to release the presure is to listen to music.

I like soft music. The soft sound of music is mellow. With the sound of this soft music I can just set and think about the girl and maybe forget about here.

The conversational tone of this writer identifies an oral-based style; the lack of development, or development by repetition, further signifies oral patterns. The writer of Sample 5 is at least two to three years older than the writer of Samples 2 and 3, yet his abilities at composing are much less proficient. The next writer, Sample 6, submitted his essay at the same placement testing period as the writer of Sample 5:

SAMPLE 6

When I feel a need to escape from the daily problems and commitments of life, I usually spend some time doing some sort of physical exercise. There are two types that I indulge in the most, basketball and weightlifting.

When I play basketball, I get totally involved in the game both physically and mentally. Since I have been in athletics since I was young, I have developed a strong sense of the "will to win." Possessing the "will to win" causes me to strive harder to my intended goal. It makes me push my body harder until I either achieve that goal or collapses in
my efforts to attain it. The actual playing of basketball extends my physical endurance to the limit because I want to win. This, in turn, makes me concentrate on my efforts rather than on my problems.

Weightlifting takes all my concentration too. It requires a lot of strength if it is done correctly. Weightlifting develops concentration so that it isolates itself on only one thing. The "will to win" is present in lifting because it helps to push a person beyond what he thinks he can do to the actual extent of what he can do.

All in all, my escape from life's everyday problems and commitments can best be explained by the way I lose myself in the ideal of the "will to win." By losing myself, I begin to relax my mind and body so that when I come back out of it, I am ready to deal with the problems and commitments of life.

While the writer of Sample 6 uses repetition in the phrase "the will to win," he does so in a much more sophisticated way than the writer of Sample 5. "The will to win" is used as a transitional device which links paragraphs two through four. While he does not include the rich vocabulary of Sample 2's essay, the reader has a sense of a personal voice coming from the writing and the essay does not get bogged down from redundancy of ideas or language.

This examination of writing samples produced by writers at different age levels supports my theory that age is not a significant determinant of writing ability. It also reinforces Luria's description of these beginning writers as those who show both oral and textual styles in their writing, not because of age but because they are placed at different levels along the oral/textual continuum.

In discussing this oral/textual continuum, it is necessary to compare the various strategies used by writers in producing language which combines qualities of the respective cultures. While beginning writers
do not make extensive use of the planning functions of language, they do not produce their composing styles randomly. One distinguishing characteristic of strategy, sometimes intentional, sometimes natural, is the degree of involvement of both oral and textual cultures. Spoken language displays a high degree of involvement, while written language is primarily detached. This oral involvement has been discussed in terms of the immediacy of the language, the assumption of shared knowledge, and the inability to supply elaboration of text. According to Wallace Chafe, a specialist in oral and literate strategies, the "difference between features of language which distinguish discourse types reflects not only and not mainly- spoken vs. written mode, but rather genre and related register growing out of communicative goals and context." Chafe proposes that in a textual strategy the language and the connections between ideas in the language are so explicit that the reader or hearer supplies minimal connective background filler; whereas, oral language purposely builds on interpersonal involvement and triggers emotional responses from the audience/readers, demanding they fill in the contextual knowledge. Many of the student writing samples in Chapters One and Two of this dissertation illustrate the demands on the part of the writers for the readers to fill in contextual knowledge. In addition, they display another characteristic mentioned by Chafe, fragmentation. He explains that written language is characterized by a high degree of integration caused by the slowness of writing and the speed of reading. In contrast, spoken language is fragmented, delivered in spurts, relying heavily on the help of the receivers of the language. This fragmentation
often causes the oral-based writer to pause and fill in with repetitive phrases or inappropriate language.

Deboral Tannen, another researcher in the area of oral and literate strategies, makes an observation about the increased use of parallelism as a "holding pattern" in oral writing techniques:

The use of syntactic parallel constructions may also be associated with reduced planning time: by repeating a syntactic construction, a speaker can stall for time, while planning new information to insert into the variable slot at the end. But what seems most significant is that syntactic parallelism establishes a mesmerizing rhythm which sweeps the hearer along: hence it is perfectly geared to knowing through involvement which underlies both oral performance and conversation. 28

Based on this theory, the frequent phrase, "You know" found in most beginning writers' work serves as more than a crossover from an oral to a textual medium; it requests the reader to fill in, to become emotionally involved in the writing experience. It is simultaneously a plea for help and a request for involvement.

Fragmentation exists not only as a holding pattern strategy but also as a symptom of what Chafe has described as "language-in-spurts."

According to Chafe

Idea units typically have a coherent intonation contour, they are typically bounded by pauses, and they usually exhibit one of a small set of syntactic structures. They are a striking, probably universal property of spoken language. It is useful to speculate that each idea unit represents a single 'perching' of consciousness, or a single 'idea' in that sense. If that is true, then when we speak we are in the habit of moving from one idea to the next at the rate of about one every two seconds. Perhaps that is even our normal 'thinking rate,' if language reflects the pace of thought. 29

Tannen and Chafe present us with typical characteristics of beginning writers, fragmentation and parallel "holding patterns;" Chafe also points
out that because we tend to produce thought mentally and verbally one unit at a time, we find this patterning a conflict when we need to write. Writing insists that we integrate a succession of ideas into a single linguistic whole in ways that we do not speak. Written language must be more complex, coherent, integrated than oral language, and it must use a variety of devices linguistically that we make no use of in speaking.

Some of the most common written language devices which integrate ideas are nominalizations, participles, attributive adjectives, sequences of prepositional phrases and complement clauses. According to Chafe, practiced writers will make use of these devices in formal writing to achieve density, to pack more information into a unit than spoken language would allow. As we have observed from our writing samples, however, beginning writers make only limited use of these devices. They string ideas together without connectives, e.g., "You know, like lets say there is a girl I like and she may talk to me but she don't like me enough to think of me as nothing more than a freind:" and, when they do attempt density, the idea units are frequently strung together with coordinating conjunctions, e.g., "I go upstairs and shut my door and turn my music on and have a nice slow tape ready to go." Chafe makes note that in spoken data there are approximately four times as many coordinating conjunctions in idea units as any other integrating device.

Perhaps the most essential difference between oral language and written language is the way "speakers" relate to their specific audiences. In one sense "holding patterns" and fragmentation patterns are oral-based language-users reaching out to require tasks of the reader, to require involvement. Chafe describes this by pointing out that speakers can
monitor the effects of what they say to their audiences, signaling involvement and participation by verbal and nonverbal clues. Speakers are aware of an obligation to communicate in a way that reflects the richness of their ideas; this way need not be logically coherent, but it holds experiential involvement. Writers have a different situation; they are less concerned with experiential richness and more concerned with producing consistent and defensible syntax when

... read by different people at different times in different places, something that will stand the test of time. I speak of 'involvement' with the audience as typical for a speaker, and 'detachment' from the audience as typical for a writer.30

As previously pointed out in this chapter, beginning writers are unable to either plan ahead for the "test of time" or to detach themselves from their audiences. Thus, we find a crossover of oral characteristics in textual composing patterns.

Building on his idea that spoken language occurs without significant coherence and written discourse uses integrating language devices to achieve coherence, Chafe conducted a study comparing a spoken narrative with its written counterpart. The results add another significant difference between the two mediums. A spoken narrative was recorded by a class member in Chafe's seminar which was studying the relationships between written and spoken language. The class member recorded a telephone conversation she held with a friend who discussed the registration of her children in school. The spoken version of the conversation was recounted in class without using the taped conversation, and amounted to 340 words distributed in 61 idea units. When the same class member wrote the
scory, she used 76 words in 4 sentences and 12 clauses. The following are excerpts taken from the two versions of "Registering Kids in School:"

Spoken Version

And um . . . Dale is going to go to A . . . junior high school. She's going into the ninth grade. . . . But they put the ninth graders . . . in with the . . . all right. The way they've got an el-elementary school in every project. But junior highs . . . um . . . there isn't one in every project. They . . . you know, develop . . . like developmental, I mean, rather than project. . . . Community. . . . And . . . the ninth grade . . . is with, because the high school's overcrowded I guess they're building a new high school? So they're . . . they're putting the——eighth and the ninth in the junior high. Dale is like . . . going into the ninth grade, . . . and . . . she is supposed to be going into high school normally. . . . But she, because of this situation, will be . . . in junior high . . . this is a school . . . this is seventh . . . uh eighth and ninth graders only . . . two thousand out in a little sticky place like Willingboro New Jersey. . . . Two thousand. . . . It's only eighth and ninth graders.

Written Version

Dale, in the ninth grade, will go to junior high school, which for this academic year consists of only the 8th and 9th graders, for a total of 2,000 students.

Visually the difference between strategies becomes apparent when we compare the results of the condensed written version with those of the oral presentation. The written version combines all of the ideas in the spoken version in a single sentence in a compact, integrated way. This is not the only significant difference. We also notice that the written version is unevaluated; the information is present, but the reader does not know how the writer feels about it.

In comparison, the spoken version does not make relationships between ideas clear, most of the connectives are "and" or "but," and it is
much longer and fragmented than the written version. The spoken version attempts to give readers verbal clues about her attitudes. She does this through repetition, internal pauses, and by her qualification of "a little sticky place like Willingboro New Jersey."

Chafe's main point in comparing these oral and written strategies is that their individual characteristics evolve from the communicative goals of the writers. Written language focuses on the content of communication, de-emphasizing the interpersonal relationship between author and audience; by contrast, oral language builds on interpersonal involvement requiring audience response and reaction. The audience must respond in order to understand the context. Chafe speaks of these strategies evolving from goals, but this gives too much purpose and planning credit to the beginning writer. The beginning writer's attempts to create two different versions of the recorded conversation would look very similar; a copy such as that of Chafe's student's written version would not be that dense if produced by a beginning writer and would not display the sense of detachment therein. The beginning writer uses the writing strategies available; generally they happen to be more oral than literate. The crossovers from oral to literate occur not because they are planned to reach an audience, but because immediacy is a natural means of expression in orality.

Thus far, most of the oral traits considered have been evaluated negatively; they interfere with the clarity and purpose of communication from the audience's viewpoint. Yet, in some instances, oral crossovers into textual strategies create a natural spontaneity that enhances rather than detracts from writing. Often planned writing is created so
carefully, is so weighted by revision and editing that it loses the intuitive feelings of the writer. Robin Lakoff in her discussion of the mingling of strategies in written communication states the problem exactly:

... Written discourse, then, is respectable; spoken, more heartfelt. A culture at any point in time has to decide whether the preferred mode of presentation of self is as a respectable or as a feeling creature. There may, at some times in some situations, be available the chance to be both at once, so that no such decision must be made. But in the matter of form of communication, a society must decide whether the ideal is that of writing or that of talking—reliability or warmth, respectability or ability to convey emotion.33

Shirley Brice Heath of Stanford University studied a community, Trackton, in the Piedmont area of the Carolinas between 1969 and 1979 to investigate which modes, spoken or written, the residents used most frequently and in what situations each mode was used. In this community all adults could read and write and encouraged their children to do the same; the community was comprised of all Black working-class constituents. Heath studied their religious institutions, working places, leisure activities, casual meetings, and social activities. Her conclusions regarding the respective uses of oral and written language show

... it is clear that, in what may be referred to as the post-industrial age, members of each community have different and varying patterns of influence and control over forms and uses of literacy in their lives... The nature of oral and written language and the interplay between them is ever-shifting, and these changes both respond to and create shifts in the individual and societal meanings of literacy.34

The residents of Trackton did not frequently use reading and writing preferring instead to renegotiate the written word into an oral, informal style whenever possible. Newspapers, documents, or public service information always had to be restructured so it could be discussed and
understood by the group. Once the written messages had been translated, people might act on them or not, depending upon their individual inclinations; however, the information was interpreted orally rather than in the original textual form. For example, discussing newspapers across adjoining porches, or working on a brochure with directions for installing a car part became joint social activities which brought the written word into an oral context.

In church, spontaneous recomposing of hymns, sermons and prayers re-created written tests which were more complex in syntactic structure. These religious restructuring events showed that members of the group understood and shared the language and its meanings.

The work situation provided closer and more difficult contact with the written word:

In work settings, when others control access to and restrict types of written information, Trackton residents have to learn to respond to inadequate meaning clues, partial sentences, and pronouns without specified referents. In these latter situations, especially those in financial and legal institutions, Trackton residents recognize their deficiency of skills, but the skills which are missing are not literacy skills, but knowledge about oral language uses which would enable them to obtain information about the content and uses of written documents, and to ask questions to clarify their meanings. 35

This conclusion is reminiscent of Richard Ohmann's findings with lower-class code-users; the inability to control language results in a lack of ability to manipulate the environment. Heath found workers' preferences for oral over written language to be primarily pragmatic: work in the mills received pay equal to or better than many of the professionals in the area, completion of advanced writing or grammar courses in high school would not have resulted in better paying jobs, improvement in
reading and writing comprehension tests would not have produced more information for personal decision making than their oral sources. In brief, those people who made greater uses of the written medium were no further ahead in controlling their lives than those who made fewer uses of it. Heath's study highlights the idea that individuals chose to use forms of oral and written language as it suited respective needs and purposes. Also, that many individuals who come from a society which places a higher value on orality than textuality will have greater difficulties translating language from one medium to the other. One of Heath's conclusions to this study supports the concept of the overlap of the two disciplines in a way that is consistent with the theory of this dissertation:

Descriptions of these literacy events and their patterns of uses in Trackton do not enable us to place the community somewhere on a continuum from full literacy to restricted literacy or non-literacy. Instead, it seems more appropriate to think of two continua, the oral and the written. Their points and extent of overlap, and similarities in structure and function, follow one pattern for Trackton, but follow others for communities with different cultures and features.

If we remove the larger frame of reference from the entire community to the individual beginning writer, the proposition still holds true. These writers can not be placed at either end of a literacy/non-literacy continuum; they may, however, be recognized as those who move along the continuum from oral to written combining the respective traits of each medium as they respond to individual situations. Obviously, as the writing samples demonstrate, some beginning writers perform these combining actions more effectively than others.

One area of effectiveness for oral language-users is that of storytelling. Many language researchers have considered this art less complex
in syntax and meaning than written narrative; they also equated different methods of encoding devices to the respective mediums differentiating the literary from the non-literary. One researcher in the art of storytelling, Livia Polanyi from the University of Amsterdam, disputes this differentiation claiming that the oral traditions of storytelling present the narrators with the same difficulties as those who write their stories. Some of her observations illustrate the difficulties beginning writers encounter when they have to shift from oral to textual narration.

Polanyi discusses the difficulties narrators face both orally and textually when they shift viewpoints while telling a story. She credits this to linguistic forms whose meanings are not fixed, such as demonstratives and pronouns, but which are determined by the actual events and discourse in the story. For example, the storyteller generally refers to where the story is taking place as "here," and other people in the story as "you," "he/she," or "they," and the narrator as "I." Sometimes, however, the narrator shifts to another viewpoint without signaling and takes the viewpoint of someone in the story to highlight a particularly important point; speaking from two worlds at once, a common device in oral storytelling can become confusing when translated into print as demonstrated in this student sample:

STUDENT L

When I first come here to OSU there was alot of things here
I need to keep out of your head-you keep on the straight
path-I need pay attention like there and there on the field
you get things straight or you going start fail.

This student writer is recreating in written form some events that have already taken place in conversational form at a previous time.
Therefore, when he begins this essay, he is writing in the present so, he, as narrator is "I." Then, as he remembers the previous conversation, presumably with his coach, the narrator shifts to "you," and "your" as it originally occurred when the coach was speaking to him. Because in the original conversation the narrator would not have heard the phrase, "my head" he refers to his coach's phrase, "you keep your head on straight." Since we can assume from the limited context the conversation might have taken place on a practice field, the "here" becomes the general location of OSU the writer/narrator introduces; and then when the conversation is recalled in the narrator's mind, OSU turns into "there" meaning "classes," and "there" also means the playing field which the coach may have specifically pointed to in conversation.

This mixture of speech forms is very common for beginning writers. Often, the narrator becomes confused and we hear several voices and conversations jumbled together as in Student "L's" writing sample. Orality can be interactive and combine voices; textuality has few opportunities for joint responses.

"Exit talk" is another device that storytellers have difficulty with in both oral and written forms according to Polanyi. "Exit talk" smooths the way in a narrative from the story being told in terms of dialogue back into the embedded conversation. Sometimes this is accomplished by relating a moral of a story, or, in some instances listeners/readers are appealed to show their appreciation of the story. Beginning writers are often unable to make this shift successfully:
STUDENT M

(this student is narrating an incident which took place during a high school dance.)

Sure, when she seen me I mean you know from everything I had put up with from her for four years and I say you aint gonna do this to me—you know dances—and she become sick at the sight of me because you know sister what I'm going to do.

First, we have the confusion of the narrator appealing to both the reader of the story and also her antagonist within the story as "you." The additional phrase, "you know dances," is thrown in as "exit talk" to have the reader smooth in details between dialogue and narrative, but it is so vague and open to so many different interpretations that it fails to accomplish this purpose. Polyani argues that this type of error is much more oral-based because

Ambiguity of exactly this sort is not possible in literary texts, or in any sort of written text for that manner, because only non-literary oral texts actually occur in the moment of speaking. Written texts never share the moment of speaking, and, while literary texts often model the moment of speaking and an embedding context, no part of a literary text can actually take place in the real world because the world in which the encoding (and decoding) takes place is never the same as the world in which the situations in the text actually obtain. . . . Therefore, since an oral story can model all of the contexts which are modelled in a literary text and is, in addition, itself unfolding in the real world, oral stories are theoretically more complex than literary narratives and will always present more ambiguity to the analyst who would want to assign semantic interpretations to every sentence in every text.37

This conclusion indicates that oral storytellers operate on many complex levels and the oral tradition is not a weaker or less complex form than the written one. Again, for beginning writers the implications are that they can manage many of the oral traditions when they are speaking, but they lack the conventions for adapting them into writing. Polanyi's
theories do offer us insights into additional reasons for the patterns we find in beginning writers' work and also point out that storytelling is a strength of the oral tradition. The author as narrator who has information to impart sometimes is an extremely effective way for a beginning writer to break away from the traditional pattern of opening an essay by repeating the prompt or restating the assignment; the following two student sample responses to the EECAP "escape" prompt illustrate this argument:

SAMPLE 7

I can't believe I screwed that trig test over! I knew I should have written it on my hand. "Mom don't mess with me." Sorry, sorry. Listen, could I borrow the car keys? I'll stop at Big Bear for ya; milk? D'accord. I'll be back. I've got to get out of here for a while. Oh, and if turkey brain calls, tell him to jump off a building. Don't ask!"

Have you ever had a day like this? Well let me tell you how mine all started and get you a great way to escape if it ever happens to you.

SAMPLE 8

Yes, yes. I do need to escape from the pressure of everyday life, my problems, and just being a kid. Although I have a couple of different ways, my favorite by far is my journal.

Now don't get me wrong, its not the kind of journal you might like, but I write whatever I want, and as an added feature I draw... you guessed it, a comic strip. Let me give you some examples of adventures of these characters.

These student introductions stand out because they were among the few which attempted to reach out to the readers with "a story to tell." They combine the best of the oral and written traditions by creating an
immediacy yet still being aware of the conventions of form. As Lakoff
said, there should be situations where both spoken and written language
merge. This should be the goal of beginning writers: to accept the
strengths of the oral tradition and slowly merge them with the textual
tradition.

In merging these two traditions, however, we must be aware of the
primary limitation of oral language-users, the inability to plan lan­
guage strategies. My study of re-reading techniques illustrates that
"backlooping" is rarely practiced by beginning writers; writers who can­
not review their work cannot plan ahead or evaluate work which has been
randomly produced. Limited to conversational strategies, beginning
writers proceed hoping for the best and being hampered by their inabil­
ity to change their work until alternative strategies are introduced.
The effectiveness of these new strategies will greatly depend on their
ability to slowly merge oral strategies into more acceptable textual
forms.

Familiarity with oral and textual traditions is necessary to plan
interceding teaching strategies; also, a knowledge of two additional
language forms, dialogic and monologic, is also necessary to further
evaluate influences on beginning writers' composing styles. The study
of dialogic and monologic forms is important for a deeper understanding
of oral and literate strategies, and also serves as a basis from which
to structure more meaningful writing experiences for beginning writers.
NOTES ON CHAPTER II


2Ibid., p. 106.


7Ibid., p. 7.


9Ibid., p. 35.

10Ibid., p. 55.

11Ibid., p. 55.

12Ibid., p. 55.

13Ibid., pp. 45-46.

14Ibid., p. 46.

15Ibid., p. 39.


17Nancy Woodson, "The Importance of Re-reading Writing," English Language Arts Bulletin, 23 (Fall/Winter 1982), 19.
18 Woodson, p. 19.


21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid., p. 70.

24 Ibid., p. 78.

25 Ibid., p. 72.

26 Ibid., p. 73.


29 Chafe, p. 37.

30 Ibid., p. 45.


32 Ibid.


36 Heath, p. 111.

CHAPTER III

MONOLOGIC AND DIALOGIC LANGUAGE: BRIDGING THE GAP

Having assumed the theory that beginning writers produce work which combines traits of oral and written language, it is important to investigate the occasions and contexts which surround the use of each discipline. It is difficult to divide oral and written language into specific categories which are used systematically because very often the circumstances under which each is used determines the selection. Frank Smith states

... there is a radical difference that cuts across the spoken-written distinction completely, so that there is in effect one form of speech and of written language with a good deal in common, quite different from another form of speech and of written language.¹

Smith proceeds to describe what he terms "situation-dependent" language; this language is related to the physical environment we encounter daily and is uttered in response to questions related to the situational setting (e.g., "Would you open that window?" "Could you let the dog out that door?"). This type of language contains many clues to its meanings so the listener can make accurate assumptions and predict what the intentions of the speaker are. Smith points out the advantages of common understanding with situation-dependent language, but also advises on its limitations; the language is fixed to the situation and can not be changed easily. ". . . One incidental consequence of this [situation language] relationship is that very often the speech can be brief,
fragmentary, and have very little grammar . . . the situation carries
most of the meaning." Smith describes the written equivalent of oral
situational language as that which is displayed on signs, posters, and
advertising. The language is brief, fragmented, and has few open-ended
connotations about it. The situation in which it occurs helps the reader
to understand it. Therefore, the oral and written language in situa­
tional settings is very similar; the language is fixed and must suit the
setting the way the reader or listener expects.

In contrast to situation-dependent language is "context-dependent"
language. Smith indicates this form is determined by the subject matter
and the language chosen to discuss it. The location, or situation, has
nothing to do with the language produced; therefore, no obvious clues
exist and the constraints to the language are not limited to the setting,
but the selection of individual words to best describe the intended
ideas:

This language cannot be terse, idiosyncratic, or elliptical;
it is much more elaborated. The elaboration does not make
it harder to understand, but easier. To be understood, the
words we write must respect the context dependence that
readers exploit in order to read text.

Context-dependent spoken language is similar to its written counterpart;
the language is not tied to any particular setting, so the place where
it is uttered will hold no clues. This form of speech, Smith says, is
the language of stories and arguments and is quite similar to the lan­
guage of written texts. In fact, one form supports the other because
familiarity with written context-dependent language facilitates listening
to spoken arguments or helps follow abstractions in speeches or lectures.
In comparing the two forms of language, situational and context-dependent, Smith echoes the same arguments that Bernstein does: those unfamiliar with the way context-dependent language works will have difficulty looking for clues, learning to read, and writing language which is comprehensible. "A child does not become a comprehensive writer by putting words together the way they go together in situation-dependent speech. The prospective writer must also be familiar with context-dependent language."4

Equating the written and spoken forms of situation-dependent and context-dependent language is essential to the argument that beginning writers not only use a combined form of orality and textuality, but also relate these combined features directly to situation-dependent and context-dependent forms of speaking and writing. In fact, it is their inability to master context-dependent language or to recognize situations that require this form that creates most of their writing difficulties. The many student writing samples in this dissertation illustrate how oral traits are tied into situational settings requiring the readers to add details as if they were sharing the settings and occasions with the writers. Abstractions and elaborations, the mainstays of context-dependent language, elude the oral-based writer; the storyteller confuses his "here's" and "there's" because he relies on situation rather than context.

Tying situational speaking and writing together also indicates a reinforcement of the patterns involved in this language form. A speaker who is totally dependent upon situational language orally will produce this same type of language textually. Without intervention, such as the
introduction of new composing techniques, it is unlikely that the situ-
ation-based language-users will switch to context-dependent forms on
their own. The context-dependent user has far more flexibility, however,
for he can recognize situation-dependent language for what it is and use
it in appropriate situations; at the same time, he is capable of shifting
into context-dependent language, both oral and written, when the occa-
sion demands. Effective writers need to differentiate which language
form is appropriate for which situations and respond to the demands ac-
cordingly. Because beginning writers are tied primarily to situational
language, they are unable to meet the demands of every occasion.

Alexander Luria introduces in Language and Cognition his own terms
for situational and context-dependent language forms, but he speaks of
both forms evolving from expanded external speech:

We usually deal with two forms of expanded external speech,
oral speech and written speech. Oral speech may, in turn,
be divided into two basic forms, dialogic speech and mono-
logic speech. The main issues in the psychological inves-
tigation of these two forms of speech are how linguistic
(synsemantic) and extralinguistic (sympractical) elements
are related and how grammatical forms and semantic struc-
tures are used in each of them. 5

According to Luria's descriptions, oral dialogic speech differs from
monologic speech in several important ways. Primarily, oral dialogic
speech does not originate with the speaker's own motives or thoughts;
the reasons for the speech are shared with other respondents, one asks
the questions and the other replies to them. Inherent in this process
is shared knowledge of the subject under discussion and the general sit-
uation involved. The awareness of the situation among the language-
users determines the grammatical syntax of the dialogue which involves
fragmentation, pauses, and restatement of questions and answers. In fact,

... the third characteristic of oral dialogic speech is that participants can rely on extralinguistic elements, i.e., they do not have to rely solely on the system of grammatical structures. Accordingly, while minicry, gestures, intonation, and the use of pauses are involved in all forms of oral speech, they play an especially important role in oral dialogic speech.°

As in Bernstein's description of the restricted code-users and Smith's characterization of situation-dependent language, dialogic speech, Luria's term for language, allows for grammatical incompleteness. The speakers do not need to use expanded elements of language in many situations, but Luria does make a refinement in his characterization of dialogic oral speech that Smith and Bernstein do not:

Dialogic speech variants range from extremely contracted and reduced forms where great significance is attached to situational and gestural intonational components, to the most complete and expanded forms of oral dialogic speech.7

This implies that there is a continuum of dialogic speech that allows for totally contracted situation-dependent language on one end, and expanded forms of language on the other. An example for each of the forms might be as follows: (reduced form) Q: "Are you coming to dinner this evening?" A: "Yes, I will be coming to dinner this evening." Obviously, both speakers understand the situation and are using dialogic speech within a closed context. The motives for the question and the response lie within the situation and the answer of the respondent actually repeats most of the question further reducing any chance of independent expanded language. An example of the expanded form of dialogic speech goes outside the limits of the situation and requires respondents
to move beyond the original utterance: e.g., Q: "What will you enjoy most about dinner this evening?" A: "I am looking forward to the dessert." In this instance, the respondent does not repeat the original utterance in his reply and he expands somewhat on the original question itself. However, the context of the situation remains implicit and shared by both speakers.

In contrast to dialogic speech, oral monologic speech requires the speaker to be responsible for the motives and utterances; Luria also refers to monologic speech as "narrative." This terminology is important because as demonstrated by student writing samples 7 and 8 in Chapter Two, "writer as narrator" is often a successful device for beginning writers.

Luria offers within his explanation of monologic speech a restriction which is pertinent to previous classifications of beginning and standard writers:

... this program [monologic speech] must restrain the speaker from repeating again and again the elements of the utterance that have already occurred. That is, the program must inhibit those forms of mental processes often termed 'perseveration.' It is easy to see what would happen to a report or a lecture if the program guiding the utterance were unstable, if the monologue ceased being a closed semantic system, or if the subject were to be constantly diverted to uncontrolled extraneous associations or inert stereotypes. 

Beginning writers employing their redundant, fragmented patterns, "being constantly diverted to uncontrolled extraneous associations or inert stereotypes," continually violate the requirements for monologic speech. Luria explains that in oral speech, grammatical incompleteness is sometimes acceptable because the other participants share the motives and situation of the speaker; however, the monologic speaker is responsible
for presenting consistent and logically structured form while making
clear transitions from one point to another. Once again, as with other
researchers, Luria signifies with his description, that monologic lan­
guage requires cohesion, expansion, and planning.

The concept of conscious planning is one which dominates Luria's
distinctions between oral speech (both dialogic and monologic) and writ­
ten speech. Asserting that written speech differs from oral speech both
in origin and psychological structure, Luria maintains written speech
"requires a conscious analysis of the means of expression." Since the
speaker is solely responsible for the motive and plan of written speech,
he/she writes primarily to "clarify, verbalize and expand an idea." This
concept of expansion, of elaboration and clarification is one that
Bernstein and others have connected with standard writers rather than be­
ginning writers. Since Luria discusses only one form of written speech
rather than dividing it into categories of dialogic and monologic as he
does with oral speech, one can only deduce that his descriptions of writ­
ten speech equate to those of researchers who describe similar qualities
attributed to elaborated, text-based writers. Some of these devices
Luria attributes to written speech are very familiar:

... written speech involves several levels which are not
distinguished in oral speech. ... Written speech involves
several processes at the phonemic level, such as the search
for individual sounds and their contrasts, the coding of
individual sounds into letters, and the combination of in­
dividual sounds and letters into complete words. To a much
greater extent than in oral speech, written speech also in­
volves decisions at the lexical level. These might involve
choosing appropriate words and searching for suitable ex­
pressions. Finally, written speech also involves conscious
operations at the syntactic level. Again, these occur au­
matically or unconsciously in oral speech. As a rule, the
writer constructs sentences consciously. The decisions
involved are based not only on existing speech habits but also on rules of grammar and syntax.\textsuperscript{11}

Luria's theories of consciously planned language with the writer selecting appropriate grammatical forms is remarkably similar to many other researchers, especially Frank Smith's viewpoint:

No writer ever produces words (or phrases or sentences) in a mental vacuum, first contemplating what should be written without reference to what has previously been written, and then revising it before beginning to contemplate what is to be written next. The consequences would be a sequence of unrelated words. Instead, every word [except the first] as it is written must be related to what has gone before, and also [unless it is the last] to what will come after.\textsuperscript{12}

While both Luria and Smith concede that there can be exceptions from one writer to another as to how extensively they use these conscious language planning devices, their descriptions of written language evoke writers familiar with form and content; also, those who can make distinctions between oral and written forms show this ability by conforming to established rules and writing habits.

Luria views the movement of practical, context-limited speech to a formal, more context-developed written language as an emancipating process.\textsuperscript{13} This process occurs through increasingly complex communication and human experiences with others. As we progress from infants to adults, we normally expand our language skills; wider semantic fields open and provide increasingly rich word choices. In monologic language, the user exploits these rich choices using language to promote his/her own thoughts and objectives. If the writer cannot accomplish these processes, language becomes more reactive than active.

Reaction, rather than action, is the mode of the beginning writer. Written speech, according to Luria, needs to be a "voluntary act;" this
evokes conscious decision making, taking command. The beginning writer
does not make voluntary language decisions; relying on half-remembered
techniques, utilizing part oral and part textual syntax, he/she lumbers
along hoping to pull the reader into language choices that must be made.

Luria observes, "... the structure of monologic, written speech does
not approximate that of oral dialogic speech," and yet, we find that
in beginning writing the structure does exactly that.

The failure of beginning writers to produce clarified thinking in
written form means they eliminate an important step linked to the actual
process of producing written speech. Luria feels that writing clarifies
thinking:

It is therefore obvious why we often utilize written speech
not only to convey prepared information, but also to process
and clarify our thinking. The idea that it is often best
to put things down in writing in order to make oneself clear
is completely sound. This is precisely why written speech
is of enormous significance for processing thought. It
represents work performed on the mode and form of an utter­
ance . . . it is a complex form of analytical activity, in
which the logical structure of thought itself is the basic
object.

Luria is one of many language researchers who feel that writing
structures cognitive processes. Some researchers such as Sondra Perl and
Nancy Somers have isolated specific parts of the writing process (in
their cases, revision) in order to focus on the particular cognitive
demands made on writers by the discipline. Ellen Nold of Stanford Uni­
versity visualizes revision as demanding two essential practices in
writing: reviewing the planning process that has produced the writing
and matching the written product against the writer's intentions and the
audience's needs. In order to judge a text against a meaning, however,
writers must make distinctions between the text's meaning for an
audience and their own intentions for the text. This process is an im-
portant one to consider because beginning writers find it an almost im-
possible task to perform. Since they do not perform planning functions
as they write, they cannot evaluate what is random and unstructured in
completed text. Also, since they assume their audience shares their in-
tended meanings, they cannot separate readers' needs from their own in-
tended meanings. Therefore, revision is a cognitive process which often
eludes beginning writers, not because of inability to perform the cogni-
tive functions, but because these writers have not participated in the
planning process prior to revision.

In fact, the structuring process of a beginning writer may follow
its own complexities in an entirely different cognitive method.16

It is typical in a conversational dialogue to receive immediate
feedback on what the hearer does and doesn't know as the conversation
proceeds. There are both verbal and nonverbal clues. In an oral dia-
logue, the speaker pursues typical language strategies to maintain con-
tact with the audience. The speaker tends to approach the topic of con-
versation in a tentative manner to insure that the listener is inter-
ested, then a rationale is presented for the conversation topic, and
finally the speaker waits for the listener's response as an indication
of both comprehension and attitude. These are very different strategies
from those of written communication as Georgia Green and Jerry Morgan
point out in their discussion of the functions of writing strategies:

The writer must assume her audience will follow her argu-
ment, but it takes a good deal of training and/or practice
to be able to write in such a way that this is a reasonable
assumption. She has to learn to make explicit all crucial
assumptions which there is a reasonable chance her intended
audience will not share, and to state explicitly the connections between assumptions and their consequences, and between intermediate conclusions and the main thesis. The connections which beginning writers make in their composing strategies are those between the cognitive demands of oral dialogue and the transposition of this dialogue into written form. It is not that they are without cognitive strategies; it is that they use those of one medium, the oral dialogic, for another medium unsuited for them, the written monologic. In brief, they create the "dialogic strategy."

Approaching written speech with those oral dialogic strategies presents immediate problems for beginning writers. First, putting off the topic until the writer is certain the reader is engaged in the subject matter invites the empty language of stalling tactics. Since the writer is usually uncertain of his/her own motives, he/she can't guess at the reader's. Sometimes the stalling strategies bog down in generalities without the writer moving to specifics; other times, the writer repeats variations of the assigned prompt hoping to move into the subject matter and engage the reader's attention but never quite accomplishes this task. When this situation becomes apparent, the writer will often move directly into the subject matter without a sufficient introduction hoping the reader will follow his/her ideas. Oral dialogic methods of engaging a respondent do not work in written form:

Prompt: We have all had relationships that have had a major impact upon our lives. Select one relationship that has been especially important to you, and explain the significance of that relationship in your life.
Have you ever wondered what relationships are for? Relationships can be wonderful things. Have you ever had anyone who has been particularly close to you you know what I mean don't you. Many times I have thought about relationships but this doesn't mean you have them. Relationships can make a difference in lives. If I ever needed a favor my coach was there. I have definitely maturated because of my basketball coach. He could hear me out. The decision to go to college is the most important one made. OSU is big but it will give me alot of things. This maturity will give me lots of chances from this relationship.

Several problems occur in this writing sample because of stalling tactics: first, the connection between the general topic, relationships, and the specific topic, the individual's relationship with the basketball coach, is not specifically made. Second, the connection not being made results in the essay drifting away from the topic of relationships into the size of the University and the indications that attending the University will create a maturity of sorts for the writer. The inability to use written planning strategies with a clearer audience in mind instead of oral strategies with a spoken conversation in mind puts the dialogic writer at a disadvantage.

A second strategy of oral dialogue is for the speaker to adjust the main part of the conversation according to the responses received from the participants. Since this is impossible in written speech, the writer can either plan a strategy prior to composing (something we acknowledge beginning writers fail to do) or move from topic to topic hoping to strike a responsive chord within the reader:

Prompt: We have all had relationships that have had a major impact upon our lives. Select one relationship that has been especially important to you, and explain the significance of that relationship in your life.
Everyday through one's life there will always be someone or something that reminds us of them, its natural of course but not always is it a pleasant thought or feeling. When meeting someone for the first time there is a sense of challenge a new beginning and a great feeling inside except that certain person I guess one could say it is a feeling of security which is important wherever you are. When two people meet things are risked too quickly and people whom are seeming to get along so well don't. How do you feel and why? People get adjusted to easily to the same lifestyle as I had done for three years, never realizing what I was missing but I kept sticking with the same person. Well, I came to realize that's what it was a feeling of not having to meet new guys. Years will go passed with loneliness but I know that what has been done was done for a good reason for change. I think everyone could use new beginnings don't you, and I am ready for a challenge.

The usual conversational tone of the dialogue is present in this sample, the writer actually engaging the reader at two points with "How do you feel and why" in line 10, and "don't you" in line 18. These are oral dialogic strategies attempting to manipulate the subject of the writing to something the reader can agree to or participate in at least marginally. Because the writer receives no immediate feedback, she hops nervously from one topic to another, first-time meetings, feelings of security, adjusting to lifestyles, relationships with one person, loneliness, and change. There are few transitions between these topics since the writer is more anxious about content appeal than form. Because of this, new topics are offered rapidly without pausing to develop any one of them. Since the writing is typified by reaction rather than action, and is assignment motivated rather than self-motivated, as in a conversation, it is unorganized and underdeveloped.
An additional oral monologic writing strategy involves the conclusions of written works. Since the writer is unaware of reader response, he/she cannot know how persuasive or engaging his/her writing has been; this creates a problem when writing conclusions. Most oral dialogic strategies allow for the participants in a conversation to collectively bring closure to the subject being discussed; in writing, however, the author stops abruptly or tentatively seldom reaching back into the text of the work for a restatement of the main idea or offering an anticipatory link between the ideas discussed and future consequences involving the same topic. The situational strategies of beginning writers cannot produce the same type of writing that context-dependent strategies produce. The cognitive processes used by beginning writers are not only hesitant but also transitory; since these writers apply their strategies in a haphazard manner, they do not perceive them as actual techniques. Rather, they are stopgap measures which are applied randomly to meet the situation at hand. For this reason, little or no learning results and what little technique is involved in these dialogic oral strategies becomes a liability rather than an asset.

If we focused on one major liability within these dialogic strategies, it would be the failure to connect the speaker/writer's intended meaning with the actual sentence meaning. In discussing the functions of language, David Olson and Nancy Torrance state

The two classes of functions of primary concern to us are (1) the functions of maintaining social relations within and between participants and (2) the functions of maintaining logical relations within and between sentences. . . . and analysis of writing requires that we recognize, and if necessary, distinguish, what the sentences mean literally and semantically (the sentence meaning), from what the
speaker means, intends, hopes to achieve . . . in ordinary conversational language what is said provides only some clues to what the speaker intends. The shared prior knowledge, the shared perceptual context, preceding utterances in the conversation, the assumed biases of the listener plus prosody, intonation and stress cues all share in the expression and recovery of the speaker’s intention. What is said or lexicalized is only a fragmentary representation of what was meant. In schooled language [term for written language], the relation between what is said and what is meant is much more direct. Meanwhile, it is important to notice that what a sentence means and what one means by a sentence may be quite different.18

According to Olson and Torrance, as children develop, they integrate these two primary functions of language, distinguishing between social relationships and sentence relationships and gradually add a third function, "the textual, an enabling function which provides the conditions for serving the other two."19 This enabling system is the skillful combining of the first two functions into effective monologic language. In oral language, the first type people use, meaning is oriented toward a specific person or persons; therefore, the rhetorical function dominates the logical function. Interpersonal relationships determine the flow and cessation of the conversation. In written language (Olson and Torrance refer to this as "schooled language") logical functions of language begin to dominate and interpersonal relationships become less important than the "idea" functions of language.

Along with the reversals of roles for each language type, the actual demands for each type change. In their study of language development in the school years, Olson and Torrance point out that textbooks do not require opinions, rather they ask for what society regards as "known information." Also, teachers tend to act as representatives of the textbooks and demand textbook language from students.20 The teachers,
therefore, control the use of oral language determining when and where it will be used:

... a more detailed study of the language of the school would show a predominance of interpersonally biased oral language in the early grades with an increasing reliance on written text and text-like language in the later grades. Through the school years, the child is becoming more reliant upon text books for the acquisition of information. Indeed, through the school years, authority passes from teacher to printed text. That is, the realignment of functions of language corresponds to a transition from oral to written forms of language.21

Those beginning writers who demonstrate an inability to progress along the continuum from oral to textual language, pay the penalty in several ways. They are continually being frustrated in their attempts to communicate because they are unable to make distinctions between what was said from what was meant; also, their oral dialogic strategies hold no value in formal social or school situations. From early grades throughout the rest of their school years, students are required to review their writing, to mentally step back in an objective way to check the content and form; in brief, they become editors of their own work. If, like beginning writers' work, there is no sense of the meaning apart from the fragmented dialogue which comprises the writing, editing and evaluation become meaningless tasks. Therefore, beginning writers miss the cognitive tasks of evaluation and revision. Olson and Torrance summarize a primary reason for the inability to distinguish intended meaning from actual text:

Written language facilitates the differentiation of what was said from what was meant whereas speech simply uses that sentence meaning as a transparent cue to the speaker's intention. That is the beginning, we suggest, of the analysis of the literal meaning of the sentences and the origins of the process of sentence accommodation, the reworking of
experience to suit the requirement of the sentence. The sensitivity to what in fact was said, and its growing autonomy from what was meant, is, as we shall see, a primary task for writing. In order to have written work that shows the "reworking of experience to suit the requirement of the sentence" the writer must have a logical plan in mind; an argument, an experience, a comparison all require structure. The reader must be able to draw deductions from writing if it is to be considered communication. Very few beginning writers can manage this; therefore, readers of the dialogic strategy expend most of their efforts on deciphering the language rather than contemplating the logical implications.

Indications exist that beginning writers do not create logical structure because they do not perform the planning functions necessary for it; there may be additional reasons for what, on the surface at least, appears to be written language constructed in hasty fashion. Luria stresses an important point in discussing word and sentence meaning which applies to beginning writers' strategies:

Comprehension is always aimed at searching for the context of an utterance. Sometimes this involves the linguistic or synsemantic context, and sometimes the extralinguistic or situational context. Without this, it is impossible to understand the entire text or to evaluate the elements in it correctly. That is why there are no 'context free' elements of an utterance and that is why we must examine the process of forming relevant hypotheses or presuppositions which determine the concrete meaning of words or phrases in a speech utterance.

According to this interpretation, in order to find meaning, the language-user must be familiar with both situational and context-dependent language. If the writer must search for the concrete meanings of words and utterances, the beginning writer, who relies primarily on situational
language, is clearly at a disadvantage. The language of an oral-based writer changes only the way in which a conversation changes; it does not elaborate to adjust to different situations. Rather, the same type of language is substituted for different occasions in a formulaic, stilted manner. Literally, the language depends upon what is happening in exact conversational situations because the situational clues the speaker receives will determine the text, written and oral. Since vocabulary is limited, the beginning writer counts on the respondents to fill in blanks when necessary. Much of the language of a beginning writer contains abstractions, cliches, meaningless slang; these cannot be pinned down to surrender "concrete meaning." In part, that is precisely why the beginning writer uses them; they fill in gaps in the writing process without having writers use their own word choices and possibly commit errors. If writers can use a cliche that is familiar to them, one that they have used frequently in conversation, they assume it must be acceptable and it becomes expedient to use it rather than spend their time searching for alternative words within their limited vocabularies.

Margaret Donaldson in her perceptive book, *Children's Minds*, discusses how children perceive language meaning. Many of her insights are pertinent to the problems of beginning writers. Donaldson believes we learn language, as children, by interaction; this interaction is dialectic and involves other animate and inanimate influences. We come to represent language to ourselves through these interactions assessing the intentions of speakers and the physical situation involved in language exchanges:
... when a child hears words that refer to a situation which he is at the same time perceiving, his interpretation of the words is influenced by the expectations which he brings to the situation. If he is disposed to construe the situation in a certain way, giving salience to some features of it rather than others, then this predisposition will influence what he takes the words to mean.25

If beginning writers are familiar with conversations that are fragmented, mutually-dependent, and restricted, then this is the language they focus on. These are the expectations they bring to a writing situation. They are influenced by the situation, not by the words. The cues are not linguistic cues, but nonverbal cues which do not translate into permanent meanings or actual written text. The linking of language, situation, and meaning are distorted by dialogic speech which cannot be expanded or translated into monologic text:

... Knowledge of word meaning grows, it undergoes development and change. Also, the process of understanding an utterance does not just depend on the serial addition of one-word meaning to another. It is an active process of structuring and making sense of the whole. Thus the 'correct' interpretation of a word on one occasion is no guarantee of full understanding on another.26

The comprehension of the whole is also stressed by Vygotsky: that we cannot understand the direct meaning of a communication unless we identify the whole inner sense which lies behind the meanings. He argues that meaning is the unit which retains the properties of the whole.

For Vygotsky, meaning is essential to an act of thought:

To develop an organic conception of language requires recognizing that word and idea are dialectically related and that the place to begin considering them both is the 'unit of meaning.'27

Vygotsky's theories, like Luria's and Smith's, are based on "action" and control of language by the users. He asserts that language-users have
options to select meanings for words, that thinking creates an ability
to manipulate symbols. A writer or speaker weighs possible choices with
a plan of representation behind them. Vygotsky feels if language-users
are to control and direct their own thinking, and consequently their own
word meanings, they must become conscious of the functions of producing
language. As Donaldson says

... A child who is trying to figure out what other people
must mean must be capable of recognizing intentions in others,
as well as having them himself. And such a child is by no
means wholly unable to decenter. While he may certainly,
like the rest of us, fail sometimes to appreciate the rela-
tivity of his own point of view, he is capable of escaping
from it. Thus, he is not debarred by egocentrism from com-
municating with us and relating to us in a personal way.28

Thus it follows, if beginning writers cannot in effect "decenter," if
they continue to interpret situations rather than language, they cannot
move beyond these limitations to comprehend "the whole of meaning." Nor
can they assume control of making words represent intentions for they
lack the skills to anticipate audience reaction and need. The passive-
ness of beginning writers affects their abilities to test language, to
test inferences and hypotheses. They cling to what they are familiar
with; therefore, we find little change in their writing styles develop-
mentally. As they progress in school, they will add some vocabulary,
their mechanics may improve somewhat; yet, their composing strategies
remain the same. Language learning is not tied to other learning for
beginning writers. They opt for the occurrence rather than the predic-
tion.

The problem then becomes how best can we help beginning writers
to equate what they mean with what they say, in fact, to create
"planned meaning." Both Donaldson and Vygotsky make contributions which apply to this problem. Donaldson states

A child will have the best chance of starting to consider possibilities of meaning if he is reading a coherent text which contains the right sort of balance between words he already knows well and words he is not sure about and if, further, the known and familiar parts of the text are so constructed as to guide him towards a manageable set of options when the unknown is encountered.\(^{29}\)

Coupled with Vygotsky's thoughts that a learner must come to understand a system before mastering it, that if a child is taught to operate a system without coming to understand that it is one system among other possible ones then, "he has not mastered the system but is, on the contrary bound by it,"\(^{30}\) we are able to determine that beginning writers cannot operate within a system that is superimposed on their limited strategies. Working on grammar drills and language rules is learning in isolation for these writers for they do not create the kind of syntax to support them. They can learn them momentarily, but they do not master them because they are unable to make practical applications with them.

If we equate Donaldson's concept of balance between the known and the unknown with a plan to move beginning writers from their known strengths, oral dialogic spoken language patterns, to unfamiliar possibilities, monologic written language patterns, then her suggestions for "a manageable set of options" must be considered. The act of speaking must be joined with the act of performing, of producing language which has previously been unstructured and spontaneous into thoughtful and planned syntax.

While we have been evaluating the effects of dialogic strategies, we have neglected many of the positive effects of this language form.
It is important to remember that dialogue, specifically narration of dialogue, is one of the few strengths of the beginning writer. In part this is so because to narrate is to converse, albeit one-sidedly. Beginning writers who cannot organize exposition can often manage narration. Many composition courses are structured with personal experience and narrative essays at the outset because students' narratives follow a "built-in" structure of events; they are writing about familiar situations concerning themselves more with content as the events tend to follow a logical sequence.

Mikhail Bakhtin, a Russian theorist and philosopher of language, became interested in the use of dialogue when language was exchanged:

There is no such thing as a "general language," a language that is spoken by a general voice, that may be divorced from a specific saying, which is charged with particular overtones. Language, when it means, is somebody talking to somebody else, even when that someone else is one's own inner addressee.31

In this sense, dialogue takes on an active role; it is "charged" and plays an active rather than passive role. Bakhtin was interested in dialogue particularly as it took place in the novel, claiming that critics often overlooked its value in place of static, traditional formal language they selected to analyze in its stead. In discussing the concept of dialogue, Bakhtin lists the types of "compositional-stylistic unities" that are involved in the novel. These have bearing on the types of dialogue and narration that beginning writers are able to produce also:

1. Direct authorial literary-artistic narration (in all its diverse variants);
2. Stylization of the various forms of oral everyday narration;

3. Stylization of the various forms of semiliterary (written) everyday narration (the letter, the diary, etc.);

4. Various forms of literary but extra-artistic authorial speech (moral, philosophical or scientific statements, oratory, ethnographic descriptions, memorands and so forth);

5. The stylistically individualized speech of characters.

Obviously beginning writers cannot expertly master all these forms, but they can produce "oral everyday narration in diverse variants," include the "individualized speech of characters," and show more adeptness at producing diaries and journals than exposition. Although they create these writing forms at lower levels of expertise, they are usually able to sustain them longer than other forms of written speech. Mina Shaughnessy feels that a writer's ability to sustain a sense of order and development in a piece of discursive writing depends on his/her ability to stay with a thought long enough to develop it:

The ability to hold larger and larger units of discourse together (from paragraph to essay to term paper to research paper) is in fact an important measure of a student's intellectual growth, and writing can be viewed in part as a technology for holding vast and complex units of thought together. But the task of remembering and constantly returning to one's purpose in a piece of writing is difficult, particularly for the inexperienced writer. Getting sidetracked or shifting points in midstream are thus common flaws in BW passages.

Beginning writers find it extremely difficult to hold elusive thoughts and formulas for exposition together, but narration, the language of dialogue, is more naturally sustained. Therefore, working with beginning writers in the narrative form accommodates their dialogic strategies and provides some solutions for their writing needs:
1. Narration retells adventures, stories, occurrences which have happened to the writer. He/she need not depend upon others for motives or thoughts since the actual situations provide the writing material.

2. In narration, events follow in sequence, so beginning writers are less distracted by the organization of the piece and can concentrate more completely on content. Therefore, the tension between form and content is somewhat lessened.

3. Since the writers are relating actual events, they tend to connect larger units of thought. Practice in connecting these larger units increases the complexity of writing and serves as practice for other modes when the writers are ready.

4. The basic connection between what the writer means and what the writer actually says will be strengthened. Instead of attempting to transpose situational events into elaborative, logical exposition, the writer can relate them in a modified conversational style which holds meaning for him/her.

5. The writer may take more chances with detail and elaboration in narration because he/she is more familiar with the subject matter being discussed and in that sense becomes an authority.

We need not consider narration, or dialogue, to be a lesser form of communication than others. Bakhtin considers the combination of dialogic
forms in the novel to form a "structured artistic system." The individualized use of a character, the narrator's voice, the socialized speech of characters all serve to shape a whole, a unit. The language of speech contributes variety and richness to interrelationships and "orchestrates all its themes." Bakhtin values individual speech forms because they generate style, "the unity of an individual person realizing himself in the language."

The concept of anticipation is an essential one to connect with dialogue because it implies a planning function on the part of the writer who must make sense of the events he constructs; also, it suggests an anticipatory function by the audience/reader who expects a temporal ordering of events as well as explanations for the reasons, motives, and consequences behind them. The author presents his narrative and the reader judges it; this is a much more familiar situation to a conversation-based writer because the text engages the reader to help the writer make events come alive. The writer does not have to work through an additional process of translating dialogue into exposition; rather, the dialogue is turned into a written conversation with the reader. Important processes evolve through this method. First, the beginning writer becomes more aware of audience since he/she writes to make events clear to the reader. The desire for the story to be understood is a strong motive for organization and clarity of text. Also, since the event is
meaningful to the writer, there are fewer instances of "textbook prose" creeping into the writing; if the author has a truer sense of what he/she wishes to say, then there is less need for imitation of style or vocabulary.

In an interesting article entitled, "Tolstoy, Vygotsky, and the Making of Meaning," Ann Bertoff recalls Tolstoy's attempts to educate peasants in the writing process, and to overcome the initial difficulties he encountered. None of the topics he first offered them interested the peasants; they were frustrated by them no matter how relevant he tried to make them or how familiar they were. Attempts at description or elaboration on common themes promoted anxiety and failure:

To our great surprise, these demands upon our pupils almost made them weep and, in spite of the aid offered them by the teacher, they emphatically refused to write upon such themes, or, if they did write, they made the most incomprehensible and senseless mistakes in orthography, language, and meaning. After his initial failures, Tolstoy realized that the simplest task was the best way to initiate writing, "the simple-minded task is the best point of departure, the best basis for learning control of language."

In an attempt to introduce some new materials for writing, he accidently hit upon some Russian proverbs which proved to be of greater interest to his students than he had anticipated. When he first introduced them to his students, they were concerned that the subject matter was too difficult; then, as they watched him write about them, they became "anxious to hear and to criticize and contribute." They discussed the proverbs orally as he wrote, and Tolstoy gave into their demands for change in the text. He noted that he was concerned with the demands for structure and the exact correspondence of the idea of the proverb to his recounting of the story; yet, the peasants were only concerned "about demands
of artistic truth." Again, we find the dichotomy of concerns of the oral and textual cultures. Tolstoy comments upon his success with the proverbs by making comparisons with the original topics which had proven failures:

That which forms the favorite description of the schools—the so-called simple objects: pigs, pots, a table—turned out to be incomparably more difficult than whole stories taken from their memories. To the teacher the simplest and most general appears as the easiest, whereas for a pupil only the complex and living appears easy.36

As teachers we often search diligently for topics that interest our students and offer up "pigs, pots, and tables" which students just as diligently turn into writing disasters. Tolstoy discovered that the proverbs offered particular examples and general precepts and in seeing this relationship, the peasants learned a lesson in concept formation. The proverbs were "living" because they suggested small parts of familiar life scenes and provided "a bridge from the familiar to the unfamiliar."

As Bertoff sums up this process:

Beginning with the proverbs assured that Tolstoy's new students would be actively engaged from the first in the making of meaning and that is a process which, like the proverbs providing the point of departure, is 'complex and living.'37

Tolstoy's method of working with his writers was to offer guidance without interference, to him "learning is remembering." The teacher becomes the facilitator of the conscious powers of those who begin to write their experiences. He felt the work of composing involved selection, choice, remembrance and "no repetition or omission of all conscious acts." In this way, Tolstoy recognizes the need for content and form because he states the necessity for the simultaneity of thinking and writing in the conscious act of composing. The consciousness of
narrating proverbs or reactions to stories is an essential one to the argument that narration, or dialogic style, is not just a "natural" or spontaneous occurrence. It is, rather, the relationship between subject matter which is more "natural" to the writer combined with the formation of conscious principles of composing techniques. As Bertoff suggests, it is the relationship of the conscious and the natural, writing which is simultaneous with thinking. An additional description might be that it is writing which is simultaneous with living. Subjects that are meaningful from the outset to writers, such as events they have witnessed or taken part in, come alive in writing; they can be reconstructed as the writer remembers them for the reader. The writer makes meaning as he/she writes. This process was the same for Tolstoy's students:

The proverbs were understood in terms of pictures which were at one and the same time images and ideas brought to consciousness as symbols created by language. The proverbs were complex and living—organic, not just 'stimulus materials'—and thus could be apprehended as form. For the young storytellers, the proverbs functioned as speculative instruments, I.A. Richards' term for the forms which find forms. The form of the proverbs answered to the symbolic forms which memory and the power of envisagement brought to consciousness. As soon as the form-finding and form-creating powers of mind are engaged, purposes are given shape; intentions are realized; meanings are created.38

We have argued consistently that beginning writers have difficulties relating form or content to the actual language forms, the symbols of meaning. Tolstoy's pupils were able to create meaning through form because they made the connection between the images in their own memories and the language they needed to master to make these memories "come alive." The concept that stories, narratives, could serve as "speculative instruments" is a strong argument for teaching dialogic language prior to monologic.
Tolstoy has several modern allies in his methodology, among them Paulo Freire, Ira Shor, and Nan Elsasser. These three teachers have all used the student-centered pedagogy to facilitate writing which high degrees of success. Paulo Freire, like Tolstoy, began his liberating literacy program with peasants, specifically those in Brazil and Chile. Freire based his principles of working for literacy on the theory that no matter how poor or illiterate a person might be, "... he is still capable of looking critically at his world in a dialogic encounter with others."39 In a dialogic situation, the individual can gradually perceive his/her own perception of reality based on the growing consciousness of his/her own social and personal place in the world. As this process takes place, language no longer remains an abstraction, rather it achieves new power and potential as the individual can name things within the culture. The great facilitator in this process of literacy is dialogue:

Only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical thinking. Without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true education. Education which is able to resolve the contradiction between teacher and student takes place in a situation in which both address their act of cognition to the object by which they are mediated. Thus, the dialogical character of education as the practice of freedom does not begin when the teacher-student meets with the students-teachers in a pedagogical situation, but rather when the former first asks himself what he will dialogue with the latter about. And preoccupation with the content of dialogue is really preoccupation with the program content of education.40

Dialogue is valued by Freire because it is ever-changing; it stimulates creativity and parallels students' experiences which are also constantly changing. Dialogue also changes the balance of power from teacher
control to a more evenly balanced student-teacher shared control. Freire considers the traditional relationship of teacher as sole narrator and student as passive receiver to be the great sickness of the educational system. The teacher fails to take into account the experiences of the students and merely forces words, devoid of meaning, on them. The students are required to respond by memorizing information without really comprehending it and mechanically repeat it back to the teachers. Education, therein, "becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor." This method of teaching is labeled "the banking system" by Freire and it is political primarily because its aim is to maintain the status quo, to keep students from questioning. The teacher knows all, the students know nothing; the teacher is the subject of all cognition, the students are the objects. Freire strongly recommends this situation be revolutionized by adopting a pedagogy referred to as "the problem-solving method." With this method, students become teachers and share the responsibilities of generating materials:

The teacher is no longer merely the one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow. In this process, arguments based on "authority" are no longer valid; in order to function, authority must be on the side of freedom, not against it. Here, no one teaches another, nor is anyone self-taught. Men teach each other, mediated by the world, by the cognizable objects which in banking education are "owned" by the teacher.

Freire feels students are at the mercy of their teachers' views of reality which are "motionless, static, compartmentalized and predictable." Teachers' reality often disconnects students from experiences they are familiar with so students are themselves stripped of creativity and the
ability to respond in ways that are more familiar to them. Freire's "problem-solving" methodology based on critical-thinking and dialogic techniques, is necessary for producing his "generative themes," for students must be introduced to the investigation of their world by critical thinking processes which help them move from the abstract to the concrete. The more active students become in the exploration of their world, the more they deepen their critical awareness. However, teachers should not impose programs to determine how to research the universe any more than they can impose the results of their own explorations; this according to Freire, becomes oppression. Communication must be the common facilitator where students produce and act upon their own ideas. A teacher can act as an observer and moderator of opinions and pull together "potential consciousness." Sometimes, just acting as a verbal recorder of pooled ideas can stimulate new ones without actually commenting upon or evaluating them in any way. Basically, Freire's ideas translate into letting the students generate their own writing ideas using the dialogue to initiate them; in his method, the oral role of discussion plays an important part in the eventual outcome of the written text. Liberating education, according to Freire, "consists in acts of cognition, not transferrals of information."

Freire makes a distinction regarding cognitive functions which supports dialogue as an important process in itself:

The problem-posing method does not dichotomize the activity of the student-teacher: he is not 'cognitive' at one point and 'narrative' at another. He is always 'cognitive', whether preparing a project or engaging in a dialogue with the students.
Again, as with Bakhtin and Tolstoy, we find the role of dialogue not a secondary form of communication, but one which involves cognitive processes creating meaning out of experience. If a student relates an experience in writing, albeit conversationally, the retelling requires a logical process, a shaping of events into language. This narrative form is as meaningful as other modes, and strives for the same critical viewpoints of the writer as exposition does. To re-emphasize Shaughnessy's argument, it is not critical thinking that needs to be stressed, it is practice with writing experiences that can lead more naturally into areas of critical thinking that requires attention.

Freire's methods of having students generate their own subjects for discussion holds great appeal for teachers who desire student-generated writing. One of these teachers, Nan Elsasser, based an entire writing program at the College of the Bahamas in 1979 on the theories of Lev Vygotsky and Paulo Freire. Elsasser decided to base the curriculum on Vygotsky's theory that we categorize and synthesize our lives through inner speech, the language of thought. However, in order to write, we must step outside our own thoughts and consciously enter the social, verbal world we share with our readers. Only when we transform the symbols of inner speech into shared language can we become successful writers. Combining this theory of Vygotsky's with a parallel one of Freire's, that the transformation of thought to text requires the conscious consideration of one's social context, Elsasser decided to use Freire's theories as her pedagogical base.

Elsasser's position at the College of the Bahamas was to teach advanced literacy. Over 90% of the students were black Bahamians,
two-thirds of which were women, who worked days and attended the college at night. All of the English classes had been taught along traditional lines with testing being accomplished by using multiple choice exams and short-answer paragraphs. Discovering that all of her students were women, she attempted to use topics that appealed to them in particular: "I look for a topic which will stress the value of personal knowledge, break down the dichotomy between personal and classroom knowledge, and require explicit elaboration." One of her first writing topics, "What You Need to Know to Live in the Bahamas" created problems for the women. Some were unable to step outside immediate contextual realities to incorporate broader viewpoints; others made lists or constructed imaginary audiences to help focus on the assignment (e.g., "Young Married Couples on Vacation in the Bahamas"). In spite of some initial setbacks with her pedagogy, Elsasser allowed her students to discuss this and other assignments orally in class as they wrote and rewrote their essays; the dialogue served as guidelines for their rough drafts. Gradually, they transformed from receivers of knowledge about their environment to pursuers of knowledge. This is the practical application of Freire's theory of breaking through personal walls to investigate collaborative, generative themes. Elsasser continued to have some difficulties with her students being unable to sort out their thoughts in terms of main ideas and illustrations, and to make connections between their own lives and implications for others, such as their readers:

I am reminded as I consider my students that teaching and learning are part of a single process. To present something in class is not to teach it. Learning happens when students make cognitive transformations, expanding and
Eventually, the women in Elsasser's class decided to concentrate on one generative theme: Bahamian marriage. They wrote about experiences with marriage, analyzed problems connected with these experiences, constructed lists comparing and contrasting positive and negative aspects of marriage and presented arguments dealing with the social experiences of marriage. Eventually, their writing, which began with narration and dialogue, encompassed all the modes. Since the women decided to publish their completed essays, they took an increasing interest in mechanics and spelling and attempted to formulate rules which would apply to the individual difficulties they were encountering while composing. Since they were publishing a controversial topic, they began to consider their audience's viewpoint; many of their readers would be Bahamian men who would be critical of their conclusions. At the end of the semester, all of the women passed the College-administered English examination and most received "B" grades in the essay portion. They had transmitted experiences that were meaningful to them into effective oral, and finally, textual language. They had made the "cognitive transformations" necessary to give meaning to words and interpret the "whole" rather than fragmentary units of the whole.

Ira Shor found a need to use these theories of Freire when he found himself teaching in an open admissions program at City University of New York in 1971. He detailed his methods in Critical Teaching and Everyday Life acknowledging Paulo Freire's work:
Dialogue was our foundational learning process; co-investigation of reality and systematization of daily knowledge were our primary vehicles for advancing language skills. I focused on the basic learning need—conceptual literacy. A conceptual inquiry into reality served to dually empower students with a stronger literacy and with a self-articulated grasp of meaning in their world.⁴⁶

Unlike Freire, Shor feels a teacher should come to class with an agenda and materials; however, the teacher should also be prepared for change as the class searches and re-designs a project. Shor sees the role of the teacher as one which includes filling in missing information, mediating devisiveness within groups, supplying missing information, recording ideas during sessions, and facilitating studies. He admits that the teacher can play a high or low profile role depending upon the changing needs of the class; however, students become the controllers or "subjects" of the learning process rather than the politically disadvantaged "objects."

Schooling needs to bring the power of the ordinary, the mainstream of life together with the cognitive skills; this can be accomplished, Shor says, through "contextual skill-development." Reading, writing, and comprehension are developed by students encountering realistic experiences, not abstract topics selected by teachers. Shor, using the critical investigation processes initiated by Freire, decided to provoke his students into generating a topic of concern to their lives so they would be interested in investigating and writing about it. Since 90% of his students were members of the working class and had experienced both good and bad times finding and keeping jobs, he initiated the general topic of "work" to give reality to the writing situation.
Within the framework of a workshop setting, Shor describes several interesting pre-writing techniques he used with his students that bear directly on the speaking/writing connection. His first activity, "dictation sequence" involved speaking, listening and composing in a phased technique. Working first in teams of two, members traded places dictating and recording thoughts on the assigned composition; this technique conditions students to listen carefully to one another in order to process the images they "see" in their minds into recorded words. They watch "composition evolve from their verbal talent," and they make a connection between their speaking language and the act of written language on paper. "By transcribing the language of a peer, they validate their own native speech, which once they put it on paper with respectful care, turns out to be a far richer resource than they had imagined." After composing, students use "voicing," a self-editing tool which permits students to use the natural grammar of their speaking voices. They simply read their papers out loud, and in so doing discover

Wherever you stumble or hesitate, your strong speaking skills are being interfered with by your less developed writing skills. This developmental distinction between speech and encoding offers students a self-educating method which uses one of their strengths to remediate one of their weaknesses, without the learning activity passing through a teacher or a grammar book. Through techniques such as these, Shor's students came to pay closer attention to the written texts they produced. They also had the security of passing from a medium they were familiar with, the oral dialogic language to the less familiar, monologic written language. Working in a familiar style with material that is not only understood but pertinent,
releases a potential for expansion of text; beginning writers have something personal to contribute to the subject matter.

It is necessary for students, especially beginning writers, to have something special to write about, because as Frank Smith says, "Writing is hard work." Yet, as the work of Freire, Elsasser and Shor illustrates, oral dialogic language-users can be helped. There are practical ways to use their strengths so they become aware of the requirements of textual styles. Frank Smith makes a case for individual language forms that speaks to the composing strategies of beginning writers:

Groups of people tend to develop their language in ways that fulfill their own purposes best, or they modify their language in ways that will make it function better. The language that one particular group uses may not be the best language for other people to use, nor may it be the language that other people think best for the group to use. But the group will take from other languages to which they are exposed to the extent that they want and ignore aspects of other languages that they do not want to adopt. We get the language that serves us best.49

The investigation of dialogic and monologic language shows that beginning writers can develop forms which serve them better than the fragmented, unplanned structures they use as dialogic strategy guides their composing techniques. Dialogic and monologic forms of language need not be incompatible if we proceed from what the beginning writer knows best, dialogue and narration. Dependent forms of speech can become independent and monologic if the writer is in harmony with meaningful subject matter. The ability to create sense and meaning out of a whole piece of writing requires planning and a sense of purpose. The lesson learned from those who worked most successfully with dialogic language-users is that purpose must come from the writers themselves, and not be imposed on them by their teachers.
In a formal school setting, purpose is often imposed upon writers in the form of essay prompts which direct their writing efforts. The structure of the prompt can determine the quality of writing; this is particularly true of beginning writers who use dialogic strategies. An examination of prompts and resultant essay responses is essential to understand the methods required to elicit maximum success with beginning writers.
NOTES ON CHAPTER III


2Ibid., p. 74.

3Ibid., p. 76.

4Ibid.


6Ibid., pp. 159-160.

7Ibid.

8Ibid., p. 162.

9Ibid., p. 166.

10Ibid., p. 165.

11Ibid., p. 166.

12Smith, pp. 104-105.

13Luria uses interesting terms "sympractical" and "synsemantic" to describe types of language. "Sympractical" language acquires meanings from concrete practical situations and activities; "synsemantic" language lifts words from their limited, unstable practical meanings to more concrete, established contexts. Written language, therefore is the most developed form of "synsemantic" language because it conforms to established rules.

14Luria, p. 166.

15Ibid.

16Sondra Perl in a case study of five basic writers in 1979 demonstrated that the lack of knowledge about revision skills interfered with their transcription abilities; the students were so concerned about
language conventions, they were unable to produce grammatically acceptable sentences.


19 Ibid., p. 237.

20 In a study prepared and cited in preprint form by C.F. Feldman and J.V. Wertsch, they reported in spite of the fact that teachers were using highly controversial material in class, only 2% of their utterances "conveyed or justified personal opinions." Classroom language is highly specialized language. Elliot Mishler, writing on "Meaning in Context" (Harvard Educational Review, 49 (1979) 1-19), discovered seven categories of "teachers' talk" and only two, responding and initiating, for pupils'. This further emphasizes the control teachers maintain over classroom language.

21 Olson and Torrance, p. 240.

22 Ibid.

23 According to Piaget, the ability to coordinate and communicate ideas has developmental importance in that the child moves from egocentrism to an awareness and need to communicate with others. The desire to communicate is present in the beginning writer, but the ability to communicate has not been adequately developed; therefore, the egocentric nature of the writing remains a primary trait.

24 Luria, p. 170.


26 Ibid., p. 73.


28 Donaldson, p. 90.

29 Ibid., p. 101.
30 Lev Vygotsky in Donaldson, p. 102.


32 Ibid., p. 246.


34 Bakhtin, p. 280.


36 Ibid., p. 250.

37 Ibid., p. 251.

38 Ibid.


40 Ibid., pp. 81-82.

41 Ibid., p. 58.

42 Ibid., p. 67.

43 Ibid., p. 68.


47 Ibid., p. 131.

48 Ibid., p. 134.

49 Smith, p. 84.
CHAPTER IV

THE PILOT PROJECT

A Study of Dialogic and Monologic Prompts and Writing Strategies

In many ways the tasks of attributing oral and textual characteristics to beginning writers and then equating them to dialogic and monologic language prove to be much less complicated than determining meaningful evaluation techniques for testing this form of language usage. In the first place, there have been many fewer studies of beginning writers than standard writers, and, most of them, such as Shaughnessy's, have evolved as case studies of description. That there is a need for more analysis of the composing styles of beginning writers is discussed by Sondra Perl in her article describing the composing processes of unskilled writers:

A second limitation pertains to the subjects studied. To date no examination of composing processes has dealt primarily with unskilled writers. As long as 'average' or skilled writers are the focus, it remains unclear as to how process research will provide teachers with a firmer understanding of the needs of students with serious writing problems.1

My own intentions to study the influence of dialogic language on beginning writers' composing styles were tied to another project which necessitated evaluation at the same time. In the many years of Placement Program Testing in The Writing Workshop at The Ohio State University,
directors of placement had added and changed essay prompts from the Summer Placement Program examinations, but had not totally renovated the Program since its inception. Neither had the essay prompts been reviewed from the student writers' viewpoints nor from their successes and failures with the written examinations. The essay prompts were developed from questions which teachers had successfully used as essay questions in Workshop classes or from ideas which graders of the examinations considered to be of "high-interest" content to the student writers. The focus of the prompts tended to stress the content of the essay rather than the construct. Also, the prevailing attitude of Workshop teachers constructing the essay prompts was that the more help the prompt could give in the way of additional information and clues, the better off these beginning writers would be. This attitude was based on the premise that "basic" students had few techniques or ideas of their own to elaborate upon to meet the demands of the prompts; therefore, material should be included to promote additional concepts by the writers.

The actual structuring of the placement examinations was to offer the students during a timed, monitored, one hour writing period, a selection of one of three essay questions (see Appendix 1). Since the Summer Placement Program tested incoming freshmen on a daily basis during the nine weeks of summer orientation, three different sets of questions were regularly interchanged to avoid plagiarism.

In 1982, the Acting Director of the Summer Placement Program for the Writing Workshop, Wendy Wayman, offered a short presentation during a Writing Workshop In-Service Day Program. She questioned some of the language and phrasing of the essay prompts in the Placement Program, but
did not make direct links to student performance with these same questions. As Acting Director of The Writing Workshop Spring Quarter 1984, I decided to investigate the possibilities of such links prior to assuming my duties as Director of Summer Placement for The Writing Workshop.

One logical place to begin this investigation was with the complaints received from teaching staff regarding inappropriate student placements in the respective courses. Staff members felt some students who had placed in the lower level course, English 050, were capable of much better work and were being held back in their composing performances by their lower-level placements. To support their arguments, teachers supplied writing samples by these students and, indeed, the samples proved much superior to the placement exam writings in every instance. Taking into account that examination situations are not indicative of the actual abilities of students to perform in all writing situations, the comparisons of performances between placement and classroom were significantly divergent and therefore unsettling.

In contrast to those complaints about students who placed at a lower level, there were also teachers' reports describing students who had been beyond their ability levels in English 060. While these reports were fewer in number than those regarding lower-level misplacements, they stated the argument conversely, that students were wasting their time attempting composing processes that were clearly beyond their abilities. Since the majority of placement examinations in question had been graded by several different evaluators each year, the question of reader-bias was not a major factor. An examination of the actual placement prompts
seemed to be the reasonable starting point since they had remained the constant factors over a previous three year testing period.

Since some objective standards were required to evaluate the prompts, the following considerations seemed logical and consistent with the expectations of those who were constructing the examinations for the student writers:

1. Is the supplemental information within the prompt helpful to the student writers?
2. Does the prompt clearly state the actual writing task required of the student writers?
3. Is there slanted language within the essay prompt construct?
4. Is the topic of the prompt of high student interest or of high teacher interest?

An examination of several of the prompts within the three sets used for placement purposes is necessary to indicate common difficulties students faced while attempting to respond to them. Since these prompts are not the primary focus of my pilot study, but are related to the formation of the study only, representative examples will be discussed, not the entire nine prompts.

SET A, Question 1

Advertisements, whether they appear on television, in magazines, or on billboards, project particular images of those intended to use their products. Many people feel these images are oversimplified and unrealistic, sometimes even insulting. For example, diet soft drink users are always attractive (they are slim and active), but they are never unattractive (overweight and lazy). Often detergent commercials portray housewives as fanatics about cleanliness,
having no concerns beyond the whiteness of their wash. How do you view advertisements and their images? Write an essay in which you explain your view of particular advertisements you have seen. You may find it helpful to restrict yourself to advertisements for one type of produce, such as beer or washing detergents or cosmetics. In any case, your discussion should refer to specific commercials or advertisements that you have seen.

A first glance at this question allows the reader to acknowledge the overwhelming amount of information given in addition to the writing task. Not only is information given, but also slanted in a negative manner regarding advertisements: (e.g., "oversimplified," "unrealistic," and "insulting.") When responding to the question, students would find the natural option to be the continuance of the opinion of the prompt. Obviously, the prompt represents the voice of the examiner and it is the object of this examination to please the grader in order to achieve the highest placement. Also, in order to go against the implied attitudes of the prompt, the student would have to reconstruct the bias by adding new and contradictory information, something a beginning writer with limited organization and vocabulary skills would not generally undertake. In this sense, therefore, the prompt limits the directions in which the writer may opt to guide the question.

The prompt does not indicate a clear writing task; rather, it asks in two separate parts of the question, "How do you view advertisements and their images?" and "Write an essay in which you explain your view . . ." so the beginning writer becomes somewhat confused about which of the two writing tasks should receive the primary focus. Also, the direction, "Write an essay in which" seemed to indicate to some writers
that there might be other materials expected for the essay, yet there
was no clear indication of what they might be.

While the topic was of high interest to teachers who viewed adver-
tisements negatively, students remembered only a few familiar advertise-
ments which they seemed to generally enjoy. Half-way through their
positive descriptions of the advertisements, however, they would realize
they had selected the overall negative viewpoint of the suggestions in
the prompt, and then they would have to reverse their attitudes. In
addition to other composing problems, these reversals added confused
viewpoints and argumentation.

Question "2" of "Set A" introduces some additional problems these
prompt choices contained:

SET A, Question 2

Many authorities feel that grades interfere with learning, that a students may become so worried about getting a cer-
tain grade that he or she is not able to study. Therefore, they suggest that, as an alternative to letter (ABCDE) grades, schools adopt a pass-fail system of evaluation. Opponents of the argument insist that grades are valuable because they enable educators to give a more specific ex-
amination of a student's work and because they motivate students who are after a certain grade. In an essay, ex-
plain why you think we should keep the ABCDE grading system or why we should change to a pass-fail system.

As in Question "1," we have slanted language in this prompt (e.g., "in-
terfere," "worried," and "valuable") but more importantly, the prompt
gives the writer much more of a headstart than one of its options,
Question 1 does. Students were able to select one side of the argument
or the other, to build on the existing opinions (in fact, most students
used the exact language of the prompt to begin their essays), to add
trite opinions and to complete a reasonably well-organized and boring
argument. While reviewing student placement examinations, I noticed those writers who selected this prompt generally placed in the higher level course, English 060, primarily because of the implied construct in the prompt. While the material was of more interest to teachers than students, students had enough general knowledge (albeit trite), about the subject matter to augment the material given in the prompt and continue the essay.

SET A, Question 3

For many years the notion that "bigger is better" has been an assumption of the American public. Americans have generally assumed, for example, that big universities, businesses, farms, machines, cars, families, houses, stores, and concerts are preferable to small ones. Do you prefer bigger universities, businesses, etc., to smaller ones? Why or why not? using one or more examples (not necessarily the ones mentioned above), explain in an essay why "bigger is better" or why "smaller is better."

This question was the third option in Set A; few students ever selected it, but those who did, fared badly. The slanted language supplies the concept in this prompt, "bigger is better," supporting it with numerous specific examples, and only in three "buried" instances, does the option of "smaller" appear.

The actual writing task is also nebulous since students are requested to (1) tell which they prefer and then asked a nonsequitur, (2) "Why or why not?"; these are followed by (3) explain why bigger is better or (4) why smaller is better. Lowest level beginning writers treated these four prompt suggestions as they would questions at the conclusions of stories in literature textbooks; they answered with brief, unelaborated statements as if responding to a list. Many writers
included responses to both parts 3 and 4 since they perceived them to be parts of the question rather than options. Clearly the content of this question was of interest only to teachers, and students who responded to this prompt had to manufacture interest in an unknown subject.

One question in "Set B" held high student interest; however, because of its difficult construct, this high-interest content proved to be a fatal attraction for students who could not master it.

SET B, Question 2

In an essay, describe the attraction a particular sport has for its spectators and players. Baseball, for instance, is a slow, leisurely game that requires individual and team play; thus, it might have special appeal as an escape from a hectic day-to-day world in which everyone seems to be out for himself or herself. In discussing the appeal of the sport, you may wish to focus on the game as professionals play it and/or your own experiences as a spectator or player. Assume that your readers already know the basic rules of the game.

Since the other two prompt choices within this set dealt with the topics of "soap operas" and "places where you grew up," most students, particularly the many athletes who were required to write placement exams, selected this prompt because of the familiar topic of "sports." The slanted language of this construct is particularly teacher-oriented with its opinions of "a hectic day-to-day world in which everyone seems to be out for himself or herself." Although the students might not have viewed the world this way, invariably they either picked up cues from this phrase or began their essays by quoting the exact words of the prompt. This delayed the discussion of "sports," the actual topic of the prompt because beginning writers were unable to make immediate
organizational connections between what they had copied from the prompt and what they wanted to contribute on their own about sports.

The confusion of the actual topic was secondary to the confusion of the actual writing task required by this prompt. The writer is asked to focus on the game (1) as professionals play it, (2) and/or (3) as a spectator and (4) as a player. The idea to discuss the sport as "professionals play it" invariably got lost as students combined this suggestion with how they played a sport; the alternative method was to combine both the "and/or" (e.g., spectator and player) parts of the question. There were virtually no instances of the "professional" plus "personal" experiences combinations because the prompt did not make the "and" connection clearly enough. Lower level writers who selected this question because of high-interest appeal had great difficulties with organization and, at times, shifting viewpoints from being participants to acting as spectators.

A second question in Set B, question 3, illustrates a problem that several of the remaining questions held for writers:

SET B, Question 3

Soap operas have always been popular and now, with the advent of nighttime soaps such as Dallas and Flamingo Road, they seem to have captured an even larger and wider audience. Even at Ohio State the lounges are filled in the late afternoon and evening with people watching their favorite soaps. Do you think people relate the stories to their own lives or identify with the characters? Do you think people learn anything from soap operas? Or are they simply a form of escape from our everyday lives? In an essay, explain the appeal of soap operas. You should use specific examples to support your point, but do not write a plot outline.
There is a slant to the question, that soap operas are popular, and it is supported with several examples one of which links the popularity of soaps with the peer group of the writer. As discussed in Set A, Question 1, the student would have to reconstruct the bias of the question and support a negative viewpoint, something few beginning writers would choose to attempt.

The task the prompt requires is muddled: (1) "do people relate the stories to their own lives?" (2) Do people "identify with the characters?" (3) Do people learn anything from soap operas? (4) Are they simply a form of escape from our everyday lives? (5) Explain the appeal of soap operas. While those who constructed the prompt viewed 1 though 4 as extra informational cues to nudge original ideas from the writers, the majority of beginning writers viewed them as parts of an entire question to be answered one at a time, and then to treat 5 as a "tacked-on" conclusion. Few writers began with the "Explain the appeal of soap operas" part because they felt they were required to respond to the individual parts of the prompt in order; and, because the primary task of the prompt was placed at the conclusion of the series of questions, it was treated as a conclusion in their own essays.

Perhaps the most significant problem with the construct of this prompt is that it requires the writer to project how others feel about a subject rather than to write about the topic from a personal viewpoint. Organizing personal ideas is extremely difficult for beginning writers, but to remove the writers from the security of subjective opinions to more objective opinions is to increase writing anxiety.
The interest level of this prompts was not high; those who selected it were overwhelmingly female, and students often complained after the examinations were completed that they knew nothing about soap operas so that limited their options to one choice in two rather than one in three.

This examination of these common placement examination difficulties with the existing prompts afforded the opportunity to consider the connection between the construct of writing prompts and the resultant student writing. Going beyond the student misplacements referred by teachers, I reviewed many samples of students' responses to these same prompts. In addition to the problems already discussed, there are several other generalizations that apply to the prompts used in the previous Summer Placement Programs:

1. When students responded to prompts which contained several suggestions in the form of questions, their essays were choppy and fragmented because they could not distinguish suggestions from the actual writing task demanded of them by the prompt.

2. When students were presented with "either/or" or "and/or" constructs, they tended to answer both parts unless the construct presented the concept of choice clearly. When students answered both parts, each part was underdeveloped and the essay as a whole took a neutral tone rather than a persuasive viewpoint.

3. When prompts extended strong opinions and offered specific examples, students used these efforts rather
than supply their own original ones. Possibly the prompts had already used many of the "common knowledge" ideas students would have used; but, the more information given in the prompt, the less original the writing was in return.

4. The prompts which were placed first on the list of three choices were often the ones elected by the lowest level writers. If these students felt they had a chance to answer the first question they read, they elected not to read further but instead began to write immediately.2

5. While three questions were given as choices, some of the limitations within the prompts (e.g., confusing writing tasks, slanted language, teacher-oriented topics) negated options so students actually had three questions which had equal difficulties and they had the option only of selecting the least confusing of the three. Therefore, students were really not given maximum opportunity to select questions best suited to their writing needs.

During the entire Spring Quarter of 1984, the Summer Placement Program prompts were evaluated to include the following requirements: to minimize slanted language, to neutralize the tone of the questions, to present either/or situations more clearly, to combine pairs of questions of equal high-content interest so students would have an actual choice. The prompts in Appendix 2 represent the results of this study,
the prompts which were used in the Summer Placement Program, 1984. As a grader in the Program, I was interested to observe that students, although they still were more inclined to write about sports and relationships, selected equally among the questions. They were still able to achieve higher placement levels when they wrote about grading systems, perhaps because there are a limited number of ideas which may be organized in a limited way dealing with this topic. Since there were fewer suggestions in these new prompts, we discovered students produced more original ideas on their own; for those who could not develop or elaborate ideas, we felt their placements in lower level classes were due to their skills and not the construct of the prompts. It was interesting that there were many fewer complaints from teaching staff regarding placements during the Fall of 1984.

Reviewing and changing these prompts led directly to the organization of my own pilot project to study the influence of dialogic and monologic essay prompts on the work of beginning writers.

The theory behind my pilot project assumed that beginning writers produced language which was significantly different from that of skilled or standard writers. Based on my studies of oral and textual traits of writers, I also assumed that on an oral/textual continuum, lower-level beginning writers would produce work more heavily characteristic of oral-based language; and, other more skilled beginning writers would be placed along the continuum in the textual language area. The implications of these placements were that the lowest-level writers would remain more heavily dependent upon their oral composing strategies when
they were required to communicate in the written mode than either the higher-level beginning writers or standard writers would be.

By assuming that the lowest-level writers would rely most heavily on oral, dialogic composing strategies, I was able to also make an assumption based on the reversal of this trend: that as writers progressed, they would show increasing mastery in language by producing monologic written strategies to a greater extent than dialogic strategies. James Moffett refers to this progression in *Teaching the Universe of Discourse*:

> The first step towards writing is made when a speaker takes over a conversation and sustains some subject alone. He has started to create a solo discourse that while intended to communicate to others is less collaborative, less prompted, and less corrected by feedback than dialogue. He bears more of the responsibility for effective communication . . . the cues for his next line are not what his interlocutor said, but what he himself just said.3

While the progression discussed in this quotation is that from speaking to writing, it is much the same progression that must take place to move a beginning writer from dependency on oral dialogic strategies to written monologic ones. James Britton also agrees with this viewpoint of measuring language progression by pointing out that as a child becomes more familiar with language forms, those adopted to different audiences and different purposes, he will draw more and more upon those forms in his own writing:

> A young child's speech will be expressive for the very reason that in his egocentrism he finds it difficult or impossible to escape from his own point of view, to take into account his listener's—or indeed to suppose that 'things as they are' could differ from 'things as he sees them'. . . change from expressive to transactional speech comes when participant demands are made—that is, when language is called upon to achieve some transaction, to get something done in the world.4
This change in language must result in the writer moving from the egocentric viewpoint of dialogue, of conversation, to forming a planned scheme and viewpoint for an unknown audience. To achieve communication is one more way to measure progression for the beginning writer.

The assumptions about writing progression, therefore, on the oral/textual continuum can be summed up in terms of independence, audience-awareness, and mastery of textual strategies over oral strategies. If a beginning writer is at the low end of the continuum, he/she will produce work which is dialogue-dependent, repetitive, fragmented, reflective of low levels of generality, and unplanned. The beginning writer at the textual end of the continuum will develop topics and writing strategies more independently, show less repetition in both ideas and syntax, develop an awareness of writing for an unknown audience and plan language structures to meet appropriate occasions. Based on the concept of the beginning writer placed at various levels along an oral/textual continuum, I constructed a pilot project which attempted to measure in descriptive terms, the writing strategies and abilities of these beginning students.

Part A: Goals of the Study

The primary goal of this study was to investigate oral (dialogic) and textual (monologic) composing strategies of beginning writers. This pilot project was designed to describe and analyze the types of writing which resulted from these divergent strategies rather than to present the results of the study in any statistical manner. The research addressed three major questions:
1. Do beginning writers produce work characteristic of both oral and textual patterns when composing in testing situations?

2. Can these patterns be influenced by essay prompts in testing situations?

3. What are the major pedagogical findings as a result of studying the relationships between essay prompts and the resultant writing strategies?

The goals of the study were tied to the writing which would be produced during a testing situation so variables such as prewriting and revision strategies would not be factors in the evaluation procedures. Similarities and differences characteristic of each pattern, oral and textual, were important components of the study as were the responses to the respective prompts. These responses would serve as indicators of how effectively student writers would be able to translate the tasks of the prompt into their own experiences and then transfer them into writing.

Part B: Design of the Study

This pilot project was designed to include basic writers who would be writing placement examinations in Spring, 1984 for Summer Quarter placement in The Writing Workshop at The Ohio State University. This particular group was selected because it would be significantly smaller than the group of students who would write for Fall Quarter placement during the Summer Orientation Program. Although the Spring group would be smaller, they would be subjected to the same testing procedures as those who would write placement examinations during the Summer Quarter.
The students who were required to write a placement examination essay were those who had scored 15 and below on their ACT examinations, and 37 and below on the SAT examinations. While Summer Quarter students had the reputation of being at lower ability levels than those students who entered in the Fall Quarter, some of the students writing for Summer Placement were higher ability students who planned to enter in the Fall but because of work or travel would be unable to write their examinations during Summer Orientation Programs. Therefore, the pilot study student population sample represented a cross-section of higher and lower level ability writers.

The actual testing dates took place over three different writing sessions, May 17th, May 24th, and June 8th in Spring of 1984. Twenty-one students wrote essays on May 21st, eighteen students wrote on May 24th, and eleven students wrote on June 8th completing the pilot study; fifty writers in all responded to the specially constructed essay prompts. The examinations themselves were administered by the University Office of Testing and students were given the same sheet of directions used for the regular Summer Placement Program Testing (see Appendix 1). Even though the examinations were given to a limited number of students, the questions themselves were rotated each time to avoid students selecting the first prompt choice simply because they read through it and understood it. For discussion purposes of this dissertation, the Pilot Project Prompts will be referred to in the order found in Appendix 3.

The examination graders were two Writing Workshop teachers trained in holistic grading practices; these same teachers would also grade placement examinations during the regular Summer Quarter Session. They
read the Pilot Project essay prompts for the first time when they collected the examinations from the first testing session on May 17th. They were not informed of the deliberate construct of those three prompts since it was my intention to have them place the students in English 050 or English 060 according to the evaluation standards already established for these respective courses rather than by my goals for this special project. (See Chapter One of this dissertation for the placement descriptions for English 050 and English 060). If the two graders could not agree on a reading, an additional reader from the Writing Workshop was available to resolve the split decision. As it happened, no such splits occurred. Therefore, the examinations were read and the results, including the examinations, were returned to me after each testing date.

The Construct of the Essay Prompts

The overall construct of the three essay prompts used in this Pilot Project was based on the theory that the strongest writing strategies of the beginning writer are those of narration and dialogue, and their weakest strategies are monologue and unstructured exposition. The strongest patterns of organization would be those based on personal experiences whereby student writers could rely on narrative sequence for structure and organization. The more difficult writing situations would require student writers to shape their own subject matter as well as select and organize the information. The focus of the narrative form of writing would be to present an experience in textual form rather than in conversational form while the monologic language would be an exercise in persuasion or argumentation whereby the effect on the reader would depend on the form and the content of the writing for success:
As we have suggested, even a child can be objective at the level of concrete narration or description; but it is an achievement of late adolescence to theorize objectively, to handle highly abstract concepts with due regard for their logical relationships, their interrelatedness within a system, and their implications downwards, that is to say at a concrete or empirical level.\textsuperscript{6}

As discussed earlier in Chapter Two of this dissertation, the age level of the beginning writer is not a factor in his/her writing development; however, the progress which Britton and others describe does move from egocentric narration to more abstract, logical, outward monologic writing. The writer does not necessarily lose track of himself/herself in the de-centering process; rather, he/she finds a viewpoint and supports it logically. The "self" is more controlled and directed while being less dependent upon shared events for support.

In setting up the language of the constructs, I wished to consider my theory that the way a prompt is constructed will affect the manner in which a student responds. Moffett discusses writing assignments in much these same terms when he links them to inner-speech:

\ldots the way a teacher 'sets up the assignment' will influence crucially the focus, level, and selectivity of the student's inner speech. In fact, since writing will be some revision of inner speech, however the teacher conceives composition, it is wiser to create a set and setting that will acknowledge this at the outset and make it work best.\textsuperscript{7}

Moffett's connections are made to emphasize the important stages an idea must evolve through from its original inception as a vague concept, inner speech, to its actual working out as an elaborated concept in written form. In order to tap into these ideas in inner-speech, topics must interest the writers while eliciting emotions and experiences that
are meaningful. Vygotsky also speaks of this same inner-speech and
writing connection:

Written language demands conscious work because its rela-
tionship to inner speech is different from that of oral
speech: the latter precedes inner speech and presupposes
its existence (the act of writing implying a translation
from inner speech). . . . The change from maximally com-
pact inner speech to maximally detailed written speech
requires what might be called deliberate semantics—
deliberate structuring of the web of meaning.8

Since I wished to connect with the students' inner thoughts while creat-
ing language in the prompts which would prove increasingly complex in
terms of tasks, I decided to work from the following guide-rules:

1. To rely on a skill the beginning writers had already
developed, dialogue, and move to a skill they have
not yet mastered, monologue.

2. To provide maximum help within the first prompt in
the form of construct, mode, and audience, then
gradually withdraw this help in the second and third
prompts.

The purpose of the prompts was to determine how effectively beginning
writers would perform during a testing session according to the essay
prompts they selected.

The progression of the construct of the prompts was based on the
process of providing what Jerome Bruner referred to as a "scaffold," that
help is provided to accomplish a task that the student wishes to accom-
plish but cannot successfully accomplish on his own. Gradually, the
help is withdrawn as the student becomes capable of sustaining the de-
sired level of language competency on his/her own. The scaffold provides
a bridge between a learned situation and a new situation which is in the process of being learned. Courtney Cazden points out that the scaffold will disappear as the need lessens and then will be replaced by new scaffolds for more elaborate structures:

Ideally it seems to me, one would hope to find opportunities for children to practice a growing range of discourse functions—explaining, narrating, instructing, etc. first in situations in which a scaffold or model of some appropriate kind is available, and then gradually with less and less help. Such opportunities should be especially important for practice in the various kinds of extended monologues that children are expected to write in assigned themes. . . . Differences in the extent and nature of the instructional scaffolding or support provided may well be the most significant differences in teachers' approaches to writing.9

The scaffolding approach designed for this Pilot Project was not constructed to help beginning writers move from one level to the next while slowly removing familiar tasks; rather, scaffolding was added to the first question, considered "dialogic," to insure maximum success for the beginning writer, and then gradually withdrawn from questions two and three to measure the decrease in success as beginning writers attempted tasks more monologic, and thus more difficult in nature. The project was an attempt to measure performance of beginning writers based on dialogic and monologic tasks with the expectations that lowest level beginning writers would perform most strongly on Prompt Question 1 and least well on Prompt Question 3.

PROMPT 1

Sports have a great attraction for both spectators and players. Using essay form, narrate one occasion for a friend or peer group which describes and shares your emotions as a spectator or player when you felt very special because of your participation. Be certain to include all the details about the occasion which are relevant to your attitude.
Prompt 1 draws on the construct of narration to maximize mode and organizational strengths of the beginning writer. By defining the audience, "friend" or "peer group" the writer is moved to consider a conversational setting which allows him/her to share emotions and experiences in a familiar manner. In limiting the event to "one occasion," the student does not have to manage a variety of experiences and ideas, but can focus on only one from the outset of the paper.

While "either/or" situations can sometimes present problems for beginning students (e.g., as in the original placement prompts), it was necessary to allow the choice of spectator or player to maximize the appeal of the question for writers. The topic of "sports" which had proven the most popular one selected by students in the original placement prompts seemed a natural one to include in the Pilot Project to increase students' interest.

PROMPT 2

Many people argue that the grading system (ABCDE) is better than a pass/fail system because it promotes competition among students. Persuade your reader in an essay that this competition can produce both negative and positive results which can directly affect your attitude toward life in general.

Prompt 2 was constructed in many aspects as a "neutral" prompt in that it was neither totally dialogic nor monologic. It combined features of both, and although the topic had never produced exciting results when used in Placement Programs, students did know enough about the topic to respond to it and order their ideas somewhat coherently by organizing their conclusions in terms of the premise reached at the outset of the essay.
The mode of organization, "persuade," is given so some amount of help is offered students; however, the concept of audience is less clearly defined as "your reader," than in Prompt 1, and most students would interpret this as the grader of the examination. Since most students in a testing situation consider the reader to be the grader, this was not an important factor.

The writer is not dealing with a personal experience in this prompt, but with a concept, "competition." Once the reader establishes the negative and positive effects of competition, these effects must be related to a general "attitude toward life." Thus, the writing task is twofold in that it must first produce comparison/contrast activities and then apply them in a persuasive mode which will convince a reader of their viability. This prompt requires much more organization and planning than does Prompt 1 even with the concept of "competition" given as a starting point for the essay.

PROMPT 3

Many sociologists feel that where we grow up has a strong influence in our lives. Discuss how this statement applies to your life using specific examples for support.

Practically all of the scaffolding has been removed from this prompt which calls for monologic analysis and organization. There is no audience mentioned, so the writer must have sufficient experience with textuality to create one. Also, the mode of the essay is reduced to "Discuss" which is much more nebulous than "narrate" and "persuade." The concept of "strong influence" is neither positive nor negative, so the writer must interpret this idea according to his/her own experiences and direct the question from this resultant conclusion. Many beginning
writers unfamiliar with what sociologists actually do might have difficulty with this part of the prompt in itself. In order to perform effectively on this prompt, students would have to interpret the meaning of the prompt, determine how it can apply to lives in general, then apply the generalization to their specific lives. All of this must be accomplished while maintaining a persuasive argument with the reader.

It is extremely difficult to construct prompts that will meet all of the requirements necessary for students to produce their best work; these prompts had some difficulties, but they did meet most of my requirements for this Pilot Project. I was not interested to see how well or how badly beginning writers, specifically low-level beginning writers, would perform in a testing situation when they selected either the dialogic or monologic prompts. A secondary interest was to see if students who selected Prompt 2 would place at the same level or higher than their language skills indicated from their ACT/SAT scores; these placements would duplicate those in the regular Summer Placement Programs where the same topic was used in one of the prompt questions.

Results of the Pilot Project

The levels of placement after the grading of each essay were determined by the existing placement sheet (see Appendix 4). For purposes of this dissertation, the term "upper-level" students will refer to those in the ACT range of 11 to 15 (English 060 grouping), while the term "lower-level" students will refer to those in the ACT 1 to 10 range (English 050 grouping). My own tables (e.g., Table 1), as does the placement sheet, indicate whether students placements after grading moved them higher or lower in the placement levels.
Since all of the writers in the Pilot Project will be referred to at some point in the study analysis, they were each assigned a writer number to distinguish them from the students whose sample writings were used and assigned letters in previous chapters of this dissertation.

Table 1 indicates the writer number, the selection of prompt, the ACT score which indicates original placement, the final placement, and an indication as to whether the writer moved higher or lower in placement. The results are based on these findings.

**TABLE 1**

PROMPT 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writer No.</th>
<th>ACT Score</th>
<th>Topic Selected</th>
<th>Placement</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>yes-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>yes-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>yes-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>yes-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>yes-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>yes-down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>yes-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>yes-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>yes-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results of Prompt 1

Total Number of Writers: 19
Total Number of Upper Level Writers: 10
Total Number of Lower Level Writers: 9
Number of UL Writers Who Placed at Same Entry Level: 9
Number of UL Writers Who Placed at Lower Levels: 1
Number of LL Writers Who Placed at Same Entry Levels: 1
Number of LL Writers Who Placed at Higher Levels: 8

Analysis of Prompt 1:

Of the lower-level beginning writers who selected this prompt, eight of them placed higher than their original ACT entry scores would have placed them prior to the essay examination. Only one of the nine lower-level writers placed at the same entry level as the original score. All but one of the upper-level writers remained at the same level indicating the majority of students, both upper and lower level, who selected this question retained their placements or improved their placements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writer No.</th>
<th>ACT Score</th>
<th>Topic Selected</th>
<th>Placement</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>yes-down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>yes-down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results of Prompt 2

Total Number of Writers: 9
Total Number of Upper Level Writers: 6
Total Number of Lower Level Writers: 3
Number of UL Writers Who Placed at Same Entry Level: 4
Number of UL Writers Who Placed at Lower Levels: 2
Number of LL Writers Who Placed at Same Entry Level: 3
Number of LL Writers Who Placed at Higher Levels: 0

Analysis of Prompt 2:

Of the lower-level beginning writers who selected this prompt, none placed higher than their original ACT scores would have placed them prior to the essay examinations; all three lower-level writers remained at the same level of placement. Four of the upper-level writers placed at the same level, but two placed lower than their original placements indicated. The majority of students who selected this prompt remained at the same level and two writers were lowered in placement standings.

TABLE 3
PROMPT 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writer No.</th>
<th>ACT Score</th>
<th>Topic Selected</th>
<th>Placement</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>yes-down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 3 (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writer No.</th>
<th>ACT Score</th>
<th>Topic Selected</th>
<th>Placement</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>yes-down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>yes-down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>yes-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results of Prompt 3

Total Number of Writers: 22  
Total Number of Upper Level Writers: 13  
Total Number of Lower Level Writers: 9  
Number of UL Writers Who Placed at Same Entry Level: 10  
Number of UL Writers Who Placed at Lower Levels: 3  
Number of LL Writers Who Placed at Same Entry Level: 8  
Number of LL Writers Who Placed at Higher Levels: 1

Analysis of Prompt 3:

Of the lower-level beginning writers who selected this prompt, only one placed higher than the original entry level placement score; the other lower-level writers retained the same placement levels. Of the upper-level writers who selected this placement, ten remained at the same level and three placed at a lower level.

As stated earlier, this was not intended to be a statistical study, but some of the numerical findings should be related to the specific questions prompting the study. Since my primary concern was with the
performances of the lower-level beginning writers with the dialogic prompt (Prompt 1) and the monologic prompt (Prompt 3) the following results are significant:

1. Lower-level writers who selected Prompt 1: 88.9% improved their placement standings
2. Lower-level writers who selected Prompt 2: 0% improved their placement standings
3. Lower-level writers who selected Prompt 3: 11% improved their placement standings

The only essay prompt which led to any sizable upward movement for lower-level writers was Prompt 1. In fact, the figures were almost reversed between Prompt 1 and Prompt 3: in Prompt 1, eight out of nine writers improved their standings; and in Prompt 3, only one out of nine writers improved. While the dialogic question, Prompt 1 was slightly less popular than Prompt 3 for writers overall, the number of lower-level writers was the same for each prompt. Since so few writers selected Prompt 2, it would be impossible to make any generalizations regarding the performances of writers responding to it; however, it might be that the double construct of dialogic and monologic appeared to require more work than the other two prompts and therefore was less appealing. It was significant that not one writer of either level moved up in placement standings, and two upper-level writers moved down. Therefore, Prompt 2 did not increase chances of success.

Prompt 3 was the most popular of the three prompt offerings, but of the twenty-two writers who selected it, only one, a lower-level
On the basis of the sizable numbers of lower-level writers who moved up in Prompt 1, the generalization could be made that based on this Pilot Project the dialogic prompt maximized the chances of lower-level beginning writers to increase their placement standings while the monologic prompt did not.

The most interesting and revealing portions of the Pilot Project, however, were not the statistical results, but the actual student essay responses to the respective prompts. The writing samples indicate the specific ways in which Prompt 1 afforded opportunities for writers to maximize dialogic strategies and, conversely, how the construct of Prompt 3 demanded more than these same strategies from lower-level beginning writers. A study of the responses of these lowest-level writers is important because they are the group that combines oral and textual traits more obviously and consistently than the higher-level beginning writers. Therefore, an examination of the works of the eight lower-level writers who increased their placement standings by selecting Prompt 1 is a helpful place to begin.

Student Writer #2 (ACT 9)

When I feel a need to escape from the daily problems and commitments of life I usually spend some time doing some sort of physical exercise. There are two types that I indulge in the most. They are basketball and weightlifting.

When I play basketball I get totally involved in the game both mentally and physically. Since I have been in athletics since I was young, I have developed a strong sense of the will to win. Possessing the will to win causes a person to
strive harder for his intended goal. It makes a person push his body harder and harder until he either achieves that goal or collapses in his efforts to attain it.

When I play basketball I want to win. This makes me concentrate all of my efforts toward the goal. One special game that I played basketball in is particularly memorable. We were down to the last minute and my will to win came through for me and I pushed the ball through the hoop just in time to hear everyone in the gym screaming wildly. We had won the game. It will be a long time before I feel like that again.

Weightlifting takes all of a person's concentration too. Weightlifting taxes a person's strength to its utmost and helps to develop one's concentration so that it isolates itself on only one thing. When I lift, I concentrate only on the weights and nothing else. The "will to win" is there in lifting because it helps to push a person beyond. One time I had a special problem and then when I lifted for about an hour, I lost myself and began to relax my mind and body.

I am ready to deal with the problems of life after I participate in these sports.

This writer demonstrates many of the dialogic strategies previously discussed: repetition (e.g., Each of the first three paragraphs begins with the same phrasing and construction) and an inability to sustain elaborated concepts. The overall essay is somewhat mechanical and suited to a "five paragraph theme" construction. However, when the writer actually makes use of the prompt in paragraph 3, we find narration lifts the paper momentarily from a stilted imitative textual style to a more animated one. We have a sense that the writer is speaking directly to an audience when he states, "When I play basketball I want to win." As he recalls the particular incident he is discussing, we sense a change in the speaker's viewpoint; it is no longer "a person" speaking, it is the player who "pushed the ball through the hoop" on a memorable occasion. This ability to narrate a specific instance in
such a lively manner lifts the paper from a lower-level placement to a higher one. It is interesting that this paragraph does not contain the same type of repetition that is prevalent throughout the remainder of the essay. Since the writer is reliving the episode in a conversational mode, he does not need to search for words or rely on the reader to fill in for him.

Student Writer 86 (ACT 9)

There are many different types of sports in the world today, but the oldest most exciting sport is wrestling. Wrestling has evolved from a terrible death fight into a great sport. High school wrestling is a joyful experience for both player and spectator. The biggest spectical in high school wres­tling is the State Tournament which combines excitement and nervousness into sport.

The excitement of the State Tournament is shown in the faces of the wrestlers for they have wrestled and fought as many as forty matches to get there. The excitement grows with every round of competition and every beat of the heart. The cool of every wrestler and coach gets thinner with every minute of the day, until the final and most important match comes around. This match is the finals for the State Cham­pionship. Those two word "State Championship" has summed up and entire season of sweat, blood, and ters.

When I stepped out on the matt that night for the State Champ's place, my parents were so nervous they couldn't even come into the hall. They paced outside and I wished I could have been there with them in part. But still, when I felt the sweat roll down my face and back as I grappled with my opponent I was glad I had made it this far. Somehow my nervousness left me and all I could feel was my hands grabbing my attacker and lifting him high so I could slap him back on the matt for a fall. For a while I felt so strong that I even lost track of the special reason I was there I just wanted to put this guy down once and for all.

Before I even realized fully what had happened my coach was pounding me on the back because I had won the match. I don't really remember how I did it.
Student Writer #6 constructs his essay in very much the same manner as Student Writer #2; he describes the sport in a detached way, from a distance (e.g., "Wrestling has evolved," "the excitement is shown in the faces of the wrestlers") until he moves into the description of his own match. With the introduction of "When I stepped out on the matt that night," we read a new sense of involvement in the writer's purpose. He tells us the events as if they were happening at the moment. The verbs change drastically from "is," "have wrestled," and "comes" in the first two paragraphs to "paced," "roll," "grapple," "slap," "pounding," "grabbing," and "lifting" in the third paragraph. As the narrator takes charge of the language in the retelling of the situation, the syntax changes significantly.

Both writers 2 and 6 begin their essays with traditional introductions and end their papers with hasty, ungeneralized conclusions. They also rely in early paragraphs on cliches to express universal generalizations; in both essays the "narrative-dialogic" paragraphs are so distinctive they could be lifted out of the respective papers and stand alone as narrative incidents.

The next four writers, #7, #8, #9 and #16 devoted their entire papers to a narrative style and it helped elevate them to higher placement levels.

Student Writer #7 (ACT 8)

As a young boy I was always taught that if you didn't have to work for something, then it wasn't worth having. I guess that's why I love the sport of football. I've been a big fan of the game even before I was old enough to play.

I started playing football, competitively, at the age of seven for the Tri-County Rams. Although we lost more then
we won I still loved to play. Maybe it was because I knew that I would never be tall enough for basketball, or good enough for baseball, but I loved it, the hitting, the sweating, all that work. But I knew it was more than that there was a real bond growing between all of us. Tommy, Darren, Barry and Chris they didn't even go to the same school, but we were close.

When it came time for Junior High School, I was no longer at a different school than the four boys I mentioned earlier. My family had moved, and I would now have to prove myself as an athlete. In football I was no longer a starter, and in basketball and baseball my decline had reached an all-time high.

My eighth grade year saw a new me, I was thinner, quicker and a little more outgoing. The new me started both ways in football, and the team went from 0-7 to 3-2-2 and everyone started to talk about being league champs when we became seniors.

The next two years for me went rather slow, I worked very hard in preparing myself for my chance, to go out on Friday night under the lights and play the game to the best of my ability.

It was now July 7, and conditioning had started. Every senior was there. We knew what was expected of us. We were the class that everyone was talking about. Coach Pery didn't have to say anything, we knew it. He worked us harder than any of us dreamed we could be worked. Running and Hitting and Sweating, but finally D-Day, our first scrimmage. Although we didn't play very well, we still came out on top. Our next scrimmage was the test we had all be waiting for, Whitehall!

Whitehall's team averaged around six foot, and about one hundred and eighty pounds. Our team on the other hand only averaged about five feet eight inches and weighed about one hundred and sixty pounds. To make a long story short, we ended up tying and the Westfall Football Team's heads began to swell.

After that, we lost one scrimmage and lost the next two games. We were spellbound, we didn't know how it happen or why. Our coach sat all the seniors down, and asked us in a unusually loud tone, what's going on and why. Next, he worked us, and worked us, and then worked us again.

Something happened to us the, we all came together because we knew we could do it, and we wanted to win more than anything in the world. So we worked together, the freshmen,
the sophomores, the juniors and the seniors. We didn't care how hard we had to work, because we knew that after that last game, and they announced that we was first team at Westfall to win an outright championship, it would all be worth it, and if I had to do it over again I'd even work harder.

The tone of Writer #7 is conversational dialogue throughout. While he doesn't single out a specific instance as the prompt suggests, he does single out a sport that changed his life and narrates some special incidents connected to the sport. There are more mechanical errors in this paper than the previous two papers, Writers #2 and #6. This writer has a lower ACT score, but in some ways his writing is more consistent than theirs. There are no places where simulated textbook language exists and from the outset, we have the impression as readers that we are being told about the importance of the writer's relationship to a sport. When the writer mentions "Tommy, Darren, Barry and Chris," he does it in the same way he would in a conversation. The reader has to fill in the details; however, the transitions between ideas are strong and the organization and detail as a whole are more impressive than usual for a writer of this level.

Student Writer #8 (ACT 10)

The vast world of sports plays an important role in many individuals' lives. However, there are those of us, who as spectators enjoy the excitement of competition between opponents and their rivals.

During the 1981 football season at Wintersville High School, the team, as a whole, played very poorly. Furthermore, the football team made quite a few mistakes which caused them to lose some games in the final seconds.

Nevertheless, the Golden Warriors of Wintersville were going to come out of their shell that hibernated them for the first half of the football season. On October 12, 1981,
the Golden Warriors credited with a record of four wins and two loses, met their cross-town rival, Steubenville Big Red. Nonetheless, the Big Red possessed a perfect record of six wins and held high ranks in the State of Ohio.

Being a member of the marching band, I clearly remember standing there on the field at half time at attention in the end zone watching the team warm up for their performance. They were behind by 10 points at that time. Sadly, I heard cries from senior football players expressing to each other how much they wanted to win this game. Frantically, the football coach ran up to our director pleading with him to play the fight song. Finally, our director gave in and we played the fight song, amazingly that gave the spectators and the players a sudden charge of electricity to continue to fight and to win that ballgame.

With all that pride and determination, the Warriors performed flawlessly during that quarter and scored a touchdown to make the game even with their rivals by the end of the third quarter. When the Big Red pulled ahead, we just played louder and the spectators still cheered; the team pulled ahead and scored two touchdowns to win the game in the fourth quarter.

All in all, the night proved to be an exciting one. We leaned it takes not only just the team but a lot of people wanting to help and reach out for a goal just as we all did on October 12, 1981 for the Wintersville Golden Warriors.

Writer #8 justifies the participant/spectator option in Prompt 1 because she clearly narrates her role in that crucial game as a participant equally as important as those who played on the football team. In fact, she is a participant in the band; but, as narrator, she also fills the role of spectator by describing the actions of the team members yelling to each other and the cheering of the crowd. In placing herself back in that specific situation, she pulls the reader back with her.

Again, as with the other writers, there is an overall organization and some rather subtle transitions which hold this piece together (e.g., "Being a member of the marching band," and "With all that pride and determination"). In all of these lower-level beginning writing placements,
we have seen that students produced form and content much more capably
than their ACT scores would indicate because their reliance on the narra-
tive form gave a structure to the events discussed in the writings.

Student Writer #9 (ACT 7)

One of the most special times in my athletic career was this past football season. Football is my favorite sport, and I feel I have done well at it.

As a senior on the football team it was my job to help the underclassmen develop. This was a big challenge but it was also very rewarding. I would always help them out so they would remember the plays. I also could talk to them from experience and give them ideas of how to deal with different situations and defenses.

Football is probably the ultimate team game. This game allows for split-second timing between the linemen. This game allows for timing between the linemen and the backfield. This timing takes weeks to perfect. The communication between the team is also mighty important. The linemen must communicate so they know what type of block to use. The backs must listen to the linemen so they know where the hole will be. But most importantly everyone must listen clearly to get the play from the quarterback.

Communication is also necessary between the coaches. The coaches must talk over the big plays and they must talk over how to deal with the broken up plays. A team must work together to have any success in the game of football. This last football season we had an outstanding year. At times when we would get tired and think we could go no longer it would just take one look at your buddy beside you and you ready to go again. You know my closest friends played on the football team and they will always mean allot to me. We would work plays out for hours a day just be sure we knew what we were doing. We would spend so much time together we would naturally think the same thing when a particular situation arose. During the plays we moved like one man only we were all together. Some of those hottest, worst days in the sun practicing with those guys, the heat killing us, will always be the happiest days of my life.

Even remembering the underclassmen who are so little but full of excitement when they watched us play. After we would come off the field they would always look us over and you knew they were jealous of how well the seniors work together. That was one of the greatest feelings I've ever had knowing
that there are 20 sophomores & juniors wanting to be like you. Treating you with all the respect in the world because they love you. I guess we too love them even though they are underclassmen just because they are part of the team.

This writer gets bogged down with the repetition and redundancy strategies which are so familiar to oral-based writers: paragraph three displays these tendencies when the writer overuses "timing" and "communication." However, the immediacy of his viewpoint when discussing not just one special occasion, but an entire special year compensates for this repetition. We understand what the communication and timing meant to him because he ties them to the closeness of the team members as a whole.

He is able to carry the theme of closeness in a detailed manner throughout the essay without fragmenting sentences or thoughts; this is an unusual feat for a writer with an ACT placement level of 7.

Student Writer #16 (ACT 9)

This story started sophomore year in high school. I was a pitcher on the Watterson baseball team. I wasn't a starting pitch but I was used as a relief pitcher. Through the beginning of the year my coach Mr. Tom Gerhart was just playing me out in right field. I was hitting the ball o.k. but not as good as I could have. So he would put in a pinch hitter for me. I also told him that I was a pitcher and could pitch. He never put me in until halfway through the season. Finally he put me in a game and I did very well. So he kept using me in relief until one game he started me at pitcher. I didn't feel like I was a starter and I told him, but he put me in anyway. The first inning they got two or four runs off of me and also I walked about five guys. That wasn't a very good thing that happened to me. So my coach took me out. Then when it came time to play upperarlington in our second meeting with them (we won the first) we were losing the game one to nothing. Then we were up five to one in the top of the seventh which was the last inning and upperarlington's last bat. The relief pitch my coach put in gave up two hits and two walks with no outs. I was playing right field at that time and then my coach walked out to the mound and put his head down.
and then looked at me and said, "Neffer, come on." So there I was on the mound with no outs and bases loaded. I felt confident. I knew I could do it. So the first person that got up I struck out, then the next person that was up hit the ball to the short stop and he threw to second and he then threw to first for a doubleplay and the last two outs.

Jesus God. I felt great after that. My coach came up and hugged me and all the players gathered around me and finally I felt needed. The coach said, "Now we have a new relief pitcher." I feel if you are confident in yourself like I was you can do things you never thought you could do before. I did.

This essay is the most narrative of all those who selected this topic, upper and lower-level writers combined. In fact, the writer gets so carried away with remembering and retelling the incident that his "Jesus God" reflects his own amazement at the events of the story. He is "in" the narrative as he recounts, "The first inning they got I think two or four runs off of me and also I walked about I would say five guys." This is conversation in textual form; the writer is remembering as he narrates. At the same time, he remembers exactly how his coach looked as he talked to him at the mound, "... he put his head down and then looked at me and said, Neffer, come on." Because of the narration techniques, the writer gives a detailed description of events that overrides the conversational strategies.

The last two writers who selected Prompt 1 and moved their placements from lower positions to higher ones did not use the narrative technique as strongly; their papers, therefore, allow the problems of oral-based techniques to stand out more clearly.
Many people feel that sports are a waste of time. You know they feel so strongly about it that they won't even participate as a spectator. The majority of the people like to watch one kind of sport. They feel it is a part of life. There are numerous sports, and all sports are competitive. That's why most people participate or spectate one particular sport, competition gives the person some kind of inner satisfaction. What a person does in a particular sport he can feel that he accomplished something. When an individual participates as a team, he feels something that a person who doesn't participate feels. It's a feeling of unity, competing as a whole.

On a football team in Stark County there is a group of distinguished men. They play on one of the finest football teams in the area. They are called the Central Catholic Crusaders. We're not just a team, we're a family.

One particular game I remember was absolutely wild. When the game started the play was so intense there were no touchdowns the first quarter, the second quarter we acquire enough ground to make an attempt at a field goal, we made it. During the third quarter St. Thomas also kicked a field goal, tying the score but we came down to the very last minute when a player intercepted a ball and ran for a touchdown. The feeling of being on that team was great. Sports is one of the most enjoyable pastimes. It has great attraction for both spectators and players.

It is interesting that the writer is so removed from his topic, by the conclusion he does not realize that he has contradicted himself from his opening remarks that "Many people feel that sports are a waste of time." This is a writer who selected the dialogic topic, but treated it as if it were the monologic topic. There is repetition in style and phrasing and when he describes the "great game" he does so at a distance. He is removed from the play and we did not share as readers the sense of excitement that we might have if he had narrated the incident in a more conversational tone. He states that the game was "wild", yet none of his descriptions match this word; he also uses the word "intense," yet there
is nothing intense about his language. I noted on the front placement cover of this examination a question mark that one of the graders had placed there indicating she may have originally had some concern about placing this writer up a level.

Student Writer #18 (ACT 8)

Competition has often been defined as "the life blood of sports," but few stop to realize that competition plays a major role in nearly all aspects of life, not just in sports. Participation in sports is important, but participation in life is too. In sports you have to try very hard to succeed and in sports you do too. Although sports is made up of competitors, life can be just as competitive in several ways.

To begin with, children grow up competing with kids their own age in two ways; grades and activities. You can usually see both of these things going on. Competition to succeed and exceed classmates if forced on the children by parents, teachers and often by other children. On the fields kids are made to play sports very hard and win for coaches and parents not just for themselves.

Finally, there seems to be an neverending competition between all adults to succeed in business and in life as well. Although there are those whom are quite satisfied to hold minimal jobs, most people in the world always seem to want to succeed.

In conclusion, competition is a major part of sports and a major part of today's society and shows through in nearly all aspect of everyday life. Perhaps that old saying should be "competition" is the life blood of all aspects of everyday life, not just sports.

This writer, like Student Writer #17, treats Prompt 1 as monologic; and, in fact, makes an analogy between the competition of sports and the competition in life. Clearly the writer does not have a "special moment" to contribute regarding the sports' topic; therefore, she turns the prompt into one she feels she can discuss. Unfortunately, she does not develop the topic sufficiently, and perhaps placed higher because for a
student with an ACT of 8, she does manage some complex sentence constructions and the amount of writing is significantly more than most writers at this level produce. She does not elaborate on her ideas; rather she states them and hopes that the reader will fill in the comparisons. In most ways, this was the weakest placement achieving a higher score of all the lower-level writers.

The dialogic prompt also helped writers at upper-level placements. Several of those were able to use the prompt and develop it in an interesting and detailed way.

Student Writer #1 (ACT 15)

In my life, I can become very troubled. Whether it is parents, my girlfriend, other girls, or even a game on television, I can become very uptight and nervous. Sometimes I will get up and fidget, or pace around the house; it does no good. My best bet for freedom from my problem is my sports outlet, my Nerf Ball.

My Nerf Ball is very lightweight and can be thrown around the house without worry of breaking anything. It came from my Nerf Basketball Set I got as a child. What I have done is set up a strike-zone on the dining room wall cubboards. Then when I get troubled or worried, I pretend I am a "big-league" pitcher and pitch a little game. It takes my mind completely off of my problem.

The other day, when I was watching a game on television, I got nervous because the game got close and exciting. I picked up my Nerf Ball and before I knew it, all of my tension was gone. It worked the same when I was upset about my girlfriend; we were having some problems getting along. This made me very uptight and nervous, so I got the ball and pretended I was pitching in a game, I was really concentrating on throwing that ball to certain spots and before I knew it, my problem was gone.

The reason I have so much success with this ball can be many things. The greatest reason is perhaps that I take my mind off of my problem and concentrate on throwing the ball where I want it to go. When I sit around and think about my problems, I make them worse than they really are. Throwing
this ball takes my mind away, and when I am through throwing I realize that they are not near or so bad. The other reason I have so much success with this is, by the time I am through, I am hot, sweaty and tired; worrying about cleaning up and resting likewise makes me forget my problems. Also the fact that the adrenaline that gets pumped over my problems is instead pumped up over pitching just makes me feel like throwing that ball is a good solution.

My pressure value of life is sports, the throwing my Nerf Ball kind of sports. No matter how childish or stupid it sounds, it helps. It takes my mind off my problem, tires me out, and turns my thinking towards cleaning up and rest. With all of this, I don't have time for problems.

Restructuring Prompt 1 to his own needs, discussing the difference his Nerf Ball makes in his life, is an indication that this writer has confidence in his ability to develop and elaborate upon a topic of his own choosing. He limits the conversational tone, but does narrate a specific incident in Paragraph Three when his system worked particularly well for him. The viewpoint is that of a narrator, but it is of a narrator familiar with textual form. There is an analysis of his actions that we don't find in the narrative styles of the lower-level beginning writers. Theirs is the writing of reaction: Writer #1 displays the controlled writing of action. It is significant that by placement level "15", beginning writers show an increased level of command of language which lies within monologic strategies. Writer #1 was able to remove the scaffolding surrounding the dialogic prompt and combine dialogic and monologic writing strategies effectively. He made the question work for him; therefore, the construct of the prompt was not inhibiting, it served as a touchstone for his own ideas.

A comparison of the performances of lower-level beginning writers in their attempts to respond to Prompt 3, the monologic prompt, is
necessary to fully evaluate the differences the prompts made on the writing produced.

As previously mentioned, several lower-level students had difficulty interpreting Prompt 3 because they were uncertain about the role of a sociologist. The first student writer shows how his difficulty with interpretation influenced his writing:

Student Writer #49 (ACT 7)

Television portrays distinct roles for men and women alike. These television roles create stereotypes for individual male and females. For example, All in the Family and The Brady Bunch. These are two of the many programs which illustrate sex roles.

First of all, Edith, from All in the Family symbolizes the perfect "wife," is constantly pampering her husband. In addition to treating Archie, her husband, like a king, she is also always the kind, nice, and helpful person. She never curses or loses her temper. Another character who shows a so called perfect wife is Carol Brady from The Brady Bunch. Carol doesn't work, like Edith. She also caters to her husband. They both have the dinner ready when their husbands come home. They both are always asking and wondering about their husbands work. On the other hand Mike, Carol's husband, and Archie, Edith's husband, are both the head of the household. Second, both them are moneymakers. Third, they expect dinner to be ready.

Programs like The Brady Bunch and All in the Family shows it can matter how you grow up. And husbands may ask why doesn't my wife do that for me? Therefore, these shows may prolong the changes of how people act, but the changes are still going to occur.

The only narration strategy going on here is that of telling small bits of plots from each situation comedy; since the writer has misinterpreted the Prompt, this narration does nothing to strengthen his purpose. Other strategies of the oral-based writer do appear. The writer carefully numbers off each point made to demonstrate to the reader that he
has something of value to say and it may be enumerated. The sentence structure is repetitive and simplistic; even if the writer had interpreted the question correctly, the major arguments would not be elaborated or well-supported. The inability to get to the argument demanded by the prompt is too difficult for many of these lower-level beginning writers:

Student Writer #34 (ACT 9)

The statement, "where we grow up has a strong influence in our lives," is a perfectly sensible statement about people. It is sensible in many ways. This statement can be true towards some trends of life and yet different in others.

Some specific examples are individuals that are brought up in one environment where their parents think one way. Like how to pick clothes and things. Which may stay with the individual all of his other life, providing that the environment stays the same.

Yet, you have the individual that might come from a rough family a place that it's every man for himself and the individual feel to survive is to always be on top.

Some people have some goal in life, in henching forth that they have become better individuals than what they had started out to be.

Therefore being bared on the poverty level or what other level of life you may arise from, does not always show the true colors of the individual till they have had a chance to shed their skin.

This writer has interpreted the prompt correctly, but was unable to develop it. When the writer attempts to elaborate, he has little to say; he realizes this midway through the essay and reverts to an imitative textual language which incorporates cliches (e.g., "shed their skin," "being bared on the poverty level") that have no meaning. We find this writer reverting to the oral-based strategy of relying on
syntax to carry the intended meaning because the individual words cannot fulfill this function. It is impossible to have organization where there is no meaning, so the writer hops from one idea to the next without elaboration of any kind. The next lower-level writer had the same problem:

Student Writer #33 (ACT 8)

Many sociologists today feel that where a person grows up, has a strong influence on their lives. This is a very true statement. For many reasons this is true, because the environment has an effect on them, the generation plays a part and the persons background has some influence.

The environment a person lives in makes every person different. For me it is a very good examples my parents and my sisters grew up in New York where the environment is so different from here. My parents look at me and say they cannot believe some of the things I do. I'm growing up here and they grew up there.

The generation a person grows up with has influence. It has influences that has a strong influence on anyone's life. These are people you hang around with. For instance, when the IZOD shirts came out all the preps went out and bought them.

A person's background must have some influence on their lives. For me my background is all Ohio but the way I do everything is all American. I don't disagree when sociologists say that where you live has influence on your life they're very right. I know since I'm very much different from my parents.

This writer, like many other lower-level writers who selected this prompt, tentatively clings to the prompt language as long as he possibly can before attempting to strike out with his own analysis. Paragraph one is comprised of three loosely constructed sentences all of which repeat the original language of Prompt 3. Then the word "influence" is repeatedly used throughout the essay; since the word has been used in the
prompt, the writer also uses it to hold his argument together. Few of
the main ideas are elaborated; the writer does make the comparison be­
tween where he grew up and his parents grew up, but he doesn't continue
with the examples to support the comparison. Like Student Writer #34, he
relies on the reader to make connections that he is unable to make. Both
of these writers flounder around in a mode that they cannot adapt to:
neither attempts a narrative conversational form, but one lower-level
writer who did, does not succeed either:

Student Writer #41 (ACT 8)

Take a second and look around a place such as a big city. Even college. The reason for the stop in thought is to see
just how much different it really is. Have you ever thought
what a small town is like? In many largely populated areas
there are many different people places and things to do as
opposed to living in a small community. The people in the
two separate communities tend to view things very differently
as sociologists say.

People in largely populated area tend to be more easy
going around large crowds of people, where as a small town
person tends to seem uneasy with heavily populated setting.

Most people today are relying a lot on how their parents
were as far as were their want to live and how. Today's
younger people just fall off into a set of pattern of life
and seem like they just don't care, if the world would end
tomorrow.

The setting in which one is brought up in today is the
biggest factor for if one would choose to get out and explore
on his or her own, their would find a whole different world
awaiting them.

This writer begins with the immediacy of a conversational tone,
but as soon as he must deal with subject matter, the conversation falls
apart. Most of these other writers who selected this prompt had the
same difficulty. There are no immediate events to recall from past
experiences; and, since the writer is unsure of how to proceed both in content and form, the essays wander uncertainly from point to point without sufficient connections. The language in all of these monologic essays is much less concrete than that of the dialogic essay responses. There are few action verbs and many more passive constructions. There is seldom a personal viewpoint and little communication between writer and audience. The monologic prompt even proved difficult for upper-level writers in several instances.

Student Writer #40 (ACT 11)

Many Sociologists feel that where we grow up influences in our lives. Ohio is one of the leading States for Street Rods and organization. Ohio has about 20 percent of all street rods in the country registered here. Street rods are old cars that have been restored to show condition. You do this by engineering modern day suspension drive train, and other things.

Ohio as the most shows each year than any state around. I have protisapated in approximately 200 shows in the last three years. I own three of these cars. I am helping my father finish his second car. Many of my friends and peers are building their cars.

There are many new businesses forming around and reproducing these cars. Show watch out Ohio the old cars are on the move and their coming back for the little imports.

This writer clearly has a topic about a hobby that has great meaning in his life. If he were asked to respond in a dialogic mode, undoubtedly he would have a lively incident to narrate about taking his cars to a particular meet, or about rebuilding one of his cars. As it happened, this writer moved down in placement level based on this essay. Another writer who moved down in placement was Writer #31:
Student Writer #31 (ACT 11)

I was born and raised in Cleveland Heights Ohio which is on the far east side of Cleveland. In more or less terms its among one of the wealthiest suburbs in Cleveland. Well, among some of the most wealthiest anyway. I lived there for 14 years and my knowledge of the city is well in hand. For instance, I know a lot of things about it. Such as, there is a statue of Grover Cleveland in it. No one knows who put the statue there.

Another Example is Severance Mall which a is medium pleasant atmosphere should have, for a shopping Mall anyways.

The most things people don't know about the Mall is that in the late 1800's & early 1900's the mall was once a wealthy man's home which he had built to surpass the magnificiance of the White House.

The people there also are very friendly and community going. But in these many places, there are not always so many advantages. Even though similar in lifestyles and people take advantage of the behalf of Cleveland Heights, is that everything is nearly clean and full of community life. But an overwhelming disadvantage even though peaceful as it is it is a very noisy community because of its thriving mobility.

On the other hand there is Berea the only difference is that in Berea everything is the exact opposite as in Cleveland Heights.

This essay never gets anywhere near the assigned topic; one can sense the writer moving further away in a totally scattered way as the paper progresses. Each sentence seems to be tacked on to the previous one with no concern for connections or progression of topic. If we compare this writer with an ACT of 11 with those writers with lower ACT scores who selected and succeeded with the dialogic topic, it is clear that this monologic topic presented difficulties for lower and higher level writers alike.
These many student examples confirm that students are not without ideas and experiences to relate, but the form in which they communicate them may be limited by their composing strategies. The assumption that the progression of beginning writers moves from dialogic to monologic strategies is well illustrated by this Pilot Project when we compare the essays of lower-level writers responding to both dialogic and monologic prompts. Perhaps the most interesting and, in terms of the goals of this study, important writer studied is Writer #1. His ACT score of 15 places him at the uppermost level of those students required to take placement examinations and his essay reflects the emerging ability to combine both dialogic and monologic strategies. While the Pilot Project was focused on the dichotomy of composing strategies, essentially we must consider the success of students, like Writer #1, to merge strategies and manipulate language for their own purposes. As stated earlier in this chapter, one measure of language ability is its effectiveness to communicate ideas. This Pilot Project has demonstrated that this effectiveness is closely tied to the relationship between familiarity of strategy and the actual writing task itself. Students will adapt their known strengths to the required writing task; if the task accommodates this process, the writing result will be successful. As we have seen, however, mismatches result in failures. While this Pilot Project was conducted under testing situations, additional theories should be examined so broader conclusions may be considered for other writing situations.
NOTES ON CHAPTER IV


2Since these studies were conducted, the essay prompts for Placement Examination purposes are rotated to prevent this bias.


5In a study by Roger L. Cayer and Renee K. Sacks on "Oral and Written Discourse of Basic Writers: Similarities and Differences," they add another quality of oral-based writers. They found that compared to writing, oral language is a predicate prominent mode and this reliance on predication tends to eliminate the subject while stressing the predicate. This causes misunderstandings and a lack of balance in syntactic development and organization.

6Britton, p. 262.


CHAPTER V

IMPLIEDATIONS OF THE PILOT STUDY

I suspect that 'speech of oneself' (the running commentary and the forms of narrative and planning speech that develop from it) constitutes an important stage in the process of learning to write. It is sustained speech, it becomes in due course internalized, and it does not rely upon feedback from a listener. However that may be, it is clear that any more or less sustained narrative speech is likely to be a lead-in to writing.

The first part of this quotation by James Britton repeats what many researchers such as Luria, Vygotsky, Moffett and others have all stated, that inner-speech is for oneself and it is egocentric. However, it must be seen as an important pre-stage in the writing process because it constitutes exploration of ideas prior to writing. The theory that this internalized speech can lead to planned speech is also important because planned, "sustained" writing strategies are required for effective communication.

The second part of the quotation deals with the concept that "sustained narrative speech is likely to be a lead-in to writing" and this idea is directly related to the major arguments of this dissertation. Moffett (Teaching the Universe of Discourse) feels that there is a continuum that begins with interior monologue, in which speaker and audience are separate but still close in time and space. Gradually, the writer deals with subjects increasingly abstract and remote. "This is
when one abstracts from previous experience and reports about 'what happened.' Then one generalizes about recurrent phenomena, about 'what happens.' And finally one theorizes about 'what will or what might happen.'\textsuperscript{2} This is precisely the process that the Pilot Project in Chapter Four intended to study. Dialogic Prompt 1 asks the student to recall "what happened" during an incident of the student's choosing; then, dialogic/monologic Prompt 2 moves a step further and requests the student to generalize about the "recurrent phenomena" of a grading system. Prompt 3 advances to the next level, "what happens," when students must argue "what happens" when people live in specific places, and project their own theories about how the environment affects them. Since this was a testing situation when students responded to these questions, they could not make the progressive steps of responding to all three topics, but the results of the Pilot Project clearly indicate how well upper and lower-level beginning writers met the challenges of each increment on the continuum.

Several researchers have reported on oral and textual traits in writing, and many have discussed the forms these traits assume. However, there have been virtually no studies which discuss the possibilities of working with students to preserve the best of one set of traits, oral, while moving the beginning writer along the continuum to another set, the textual. Moffett, Elbow, Emig, and Flower propose interesting techniques for various stages of the writing process, but they assume that writers are capable of moving from one set of strategies to another. This is not always a realistic assumption when working with beginning writers. If a beginning writer uses dialogic strategies, he/she tends
simply apply them to the new techniques. Very often teachers complain
that they have introduced endless new pre-writing techniques, but there
are certain students that they just can't seem to reach. These are
frequently the lower-level beginning writers.

Based on the Pilot Project, it is not effective to impose theories
from without; but rather, to work from the strengths of the strategies
which already exist and slowly help the students to exercise control over
a variety of composing techniques.

When we impose techniques from without, we must remember that tech­
niques are useless without sufficient information for the writer to
report. The responses of the lower-level beginning writers clearly
showed they had difficulty when they were presented with a problem that
was not within their range of abilities and experiences. If a teacher
had given them time to pre-write on Prompt 3 and revise their first sev­
eral drafts, some of the students might have produced slightly better
essays, but many would have continued to impose dialogic strategies on
a monologic topic. Also, it does not help students to solve the prob­
lems of one essay if they can not transfer their composing strategies to
other writing assignments. Just because beginning writers receive maxi­
mum help on a paper and finally achieve a reasonable response to an
assignment, does not necessarily mean they have assimilated new tech­
niques which will translate successfully to the next writing projects.
This is often a cause of frustration for students who feel they have
achieved an insight into the writing process only to have the same help­
less feeling and the same inadequate strategies when a new writing task
is assigned to them.
If we examine the strengths of the essays produced in response to the dialogic prompt in the Pilot Project, we find the retelling of experiences produced the most coherent organization and the liveliest language. Students wrote from what they knew. However, at their least effective, the dialogic essays refused to recognize the needs of an audience; the egocentricity of the writers caused problems for the readers. Moffett addresses this problem in *Coming On Center*:

... I think most of our problems in composing our own ideas, whether we're talking or writing concern our difficulty in separating ourselves from our audience and from our subject, so that we assume too much; and most of our problems in comprehending what others say and write concern tuning in on an individual who is separate from ourselves.\(^3\)

Instead of aiming for mastery of mechanics or increased length of text for beginning writers, more time needs to be focused on de-centering strategies. Much of this should involve oral dialogue at the outset of assignments so that eventually the beginning students can make a distinction between the needs of the writer/speaker and those of the reader/listener. Until this process is achieved, the dialogic writing strategies cannot be used effectively.

Also, the attitudes of many teachers that narration is a lesser form of written communication which needs to be hastily introduced on the way to higher forms such as argumentation need some adjustments. Beginning writers require time to perfect their skills, to evaluate some of the strengths they possess and to incorporate them, as Writer #1 in the Pilot Project does, into new strategies. Moffett suggests acting stories out, discussing stories so the discrepancies of interpretation become clear:
... They need to compare their incomprehension, talk about their incomprehension, openly, not try to hide it, and work out problems of comprehension—to raise consciousness... One comes back over points but at different levels of consciousness so that if kids learn only to break down and analyze, to separate, to divide, this is going to be a negative moment. They have at the same time to learn how to put everything back together again.4

Beginning writing students are capable of talking stories out, of making comparisons and being made aware of discrepancies between writer/reader viewpoints. They have great difficulty, however, objectively evaluating and restructuring their writing to effectively communicate with their audiences.

Mina Shaughnessy recognized this difficulty for basic writing students and based it in terms of abstract and concrete statements:

The student, on the other hand, has not been responsible as a speaker for the advancement of formal learning. His 'propositions' seem to come unbidden, without the strain that is associated with the formulation of thesis statements. He has been free to express opinions without a display of evidence or recount experiences without explaining what they "mean." ... he may not have acquired the habit of questioning his propositions, as a listener might, in order to locate the points that require amplification or evidence. Or he may be marooned with a proposition he cannot defend for lack of information or for want of practice in retrieving the history of an idea as it developed in his mind.5

What is natural to a beginning writer is recounting experiences; what seems unnatural is analyzing these experiences projecting their resultant analyses into new writing situations. A beginning writer, such as Writer #16 in the Pilot Project, can describe how it feels in a specific instance to be a pitcher in a crucial ballgame, but he would have difficulty if a writing assignment requested him to "Discuss how people react in crucial situations and tell what this reveals about human
nature." If this student received that specific assignment, he might never have considered his pitching experience; because, while it was what a teacher might consider a crucial experience, to the student it was an exciting test of his ability that made him feel good about himself. This case is a classic example of what Shaughnessy refers to as "unbidden experience." The student has not formulated a thesis, rather he interprets what he is about to tell the reader as a story, "This story started sophomore year in high school." His evidence and support for his "story" derive from his feelings, "I felt confident. I knew I could do it," and from his ability to carry through, "I feel like if you are confident in yourself like I was you can do things you never thought you could do before." Because this essay is organized by narrative form, these devices work as support. However, they will not suffice in a monologic form. This writer must slowly be taught to have a sense of direction about his writing. He must abstract some of his ideas and support those abstractions for the reader. The important process for teachers to follow is to start with beginning writers at the place where their ideas originate, conversation, dialogue, and then introduce writing strategies slowly as the students are ready to accommodate them into their writing patterns.

This Pilot Project also demonstrated that the structure of the essay prompt, whether in testing or assignment situations, will have a strong influence on the actual writing students produce. If we create audiences for students, such as Prompt 1 does, we get entirely different results than when students write for teachers or an unknown audience. Arthur Applebee suggests:
... [there is] a lack of demand inherent in writing for someone [teacher] who understands in advance, because they will supply the missing information and reading for what the student 'meant to say 

thoughts are ordered more carefully when addressing uninformed audiences than when addressing well-informed ones. This is similar to the claim in Britton's work that when audiences other than the teacher existed—or were created through the intervention of the project team—both involvement with the writing task and the quality of the writing that resulted improved noticeably.6

The information teachers add to a writing prompt (as evidenced by the original Summer Placement Prompts for the Writing Workshop discussed in Chapter Four) usually is directed at support, organization, or analysis in an essay, not at the creation of an audience. We must not assume beginning writers can create their own audiences; teachers may structure assignments such as pen-pals or diary and journal writing wherein students will begin to create audiences, but still the assignment was set up by the teacher, the audience was provided. Also, when we submit essay questions to beginning writers whereby they interpret the reader of their writing as "the teacher," we perpetuate their conversational strategy of "shared meanings."

One of the most basic strategies we should teach beginning writers is the need to communicate from a sense of purpose. They can communicate through conversation, by relating experiences; but, when we introduce unknown audiences or atypical experiences into writing situations, we upset the balance of communication for the beginning writer. There is every good reason for providing scaffolding experiences for the beginning writer; one of these must be the creation of varied and realistic audiences. In a spoken conversation, the audience is real and the speaker has a sense of how the dialogue is progressing. In writing,
the audience is not always known and the text must be produced as if any person could read it. This is an extremely difficult task for a beginning writer; therefore, until this writer can close the gap between telling a story in dialogic form and creating a work which will stand the scrutiny of any reader, he/she must slowly develop his/her own concept of what effects an audience has on a writer.

The concept of development when discussing the beginning writer is the most essential theory proposed in this dissertation. Poised between oral and textual composing strategies, these students are often considered dull or handicapped writers. Actually, they are emerging writers who must grapple with tasks beyond their current composing strategies:

Often a student begins to write his essay before he has arrived at what might be called a starting idea so that his essay, rather than being the development of an idea, is the record of an idea developing. In a sense, of course, writing is a process whereby an initial idea gets extended and refined, but here I am referring to a stage in the composing process that has probably been internalized by experienced writers—the stage when the writer picks up certain tentative paths that seem to branch out from his propositions, or pushes his proposition far enough to discover that it is at odds with what he really wants to say, or immerses himself in his data hazarding guesses here and there as to what they mean, but resisting any formulation that secures order at the cost of comprehensiveness.

The BW student, pressed usually by time and unacquainted with the ways writers build their ideas, is likely to begin writing before his ideas have undergone this period of incubation. Mina Shaughnessy describes this emerging stage as one which is "tentative" and "pressed" at the same time; obviously, this combination is what prevents beginning writers from adopting more aggressive composing techniques. In order to minimize the effects of this combination, we need to maximize options for beginning writers. We need to open
opportunities for discussion prior to writing so there is a continuity of speech in thought into speech in writing. When teachers assign writing tasks, students should help develop topics that emerge from their own interests as often as possible. Essay prompts should always include a variety of questions, both dialogic and monologic, so that the needs of all writers are addressed. When beginning writers are presented with five possible essay questions, with different topics but they are all constructed monologically, then there really is no choice involved for the dialogic writer. Beginning writers need opportunities to convey what they know in an order they are familiar with to communicate meaningfully. As Moffett states: "Writing can be hard work, and until someone does enough of it to find for himself how well it pays off, he needs every enriching connection possible." Writing will not "pay off" for beginning writers until they master and combine the richness of their narrative experiences and the effective means of communicating them for an appreciative and comprehending audience.
NOTES ON CHAPTER V


4Ibid., p. 69.


7Shaughnessy, p. 234.
APPENDIX A

English Theme Topics: Directions
ENGLISH THEME TOPICS

DIRECTIONS

A. The person administering the essay will read through the instructions and the writing assignment with you.

B. Check the gummed registration label on the front of your orientation folder to determine whether you belong to the ET or TH group. Then next to your name, write the abbreviation for your group (ET or TH) on the front side of the first sheet of your essay.

C. Indicate whether or not English was the first language you learned at home. If yes, write YES, if no, write NO—and the name of your native language at the top of the first page of your essay, for example: NO-Chinese.

SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING

A. In your essay, you are expected to demonstrate your composition and grammatical skills by writing an expository (informative, explanatory) essay of two to four pages, which has:

1) a clearly defined main idea;
2) clear and logical organization of main and subordinate ideas;
3) supporting details drawn from experience, observation, and/or reading;
4) paragraphs, and standard sentences written in Edited American English (the dialect and grammar used by educated writers of the language).

B. Essays should not simply tell a story, but should make a point and develop it.

C. Before beginning to write your essay, read the topic carefully. You might spend a few minutes, probably no more than five, thinking about and organizing your response before you begin to write. You may use any of the two test sheets as scrap paper to free write, plan, or outline.

D. Make a special effort to write legibly and take time to proofread your essay before you turn it in. You may write in pencil, erase, cross out, or draw arrows, but do not take time to recopy your essay. Both your spelling and punctuation are important and will be taken into account by your readers.

5/83
APPENDIX B

Resolved Essay Prompts
Resolved Essay Prompts

A

1. Sometimes we feel a need to escape from daily problems and commitments that can seem overpowering. Select one method of escape that works for you, and explain why it works so well.

2. Your knowledge of where you grew up has led you to form definite opinions about that place. Explain the advantages or disadvantages about growing up where you lived.

B

1. Select one person, group, idea, activity, or goal that is important to you. Explain the significance that this person, group, idea, activity, or goal has for you.

2. Some schools adopt a grading policy of ABCDF; others rely on the pass/fail system. Explain why you prefer one of these policies.

C

1. We have all had relationships that have had a major impact upon our lives. Select one relationship that has been especially important to you, and explain the significance of that relationship in your life.

2. We are all aware of advertising. Select an advertisement that you particularly like or dislike and explain why you like or dislike it.
APPENDIX C

Pilot Project Prompts
1. Sports have a great attraction for both spectators and players. Using essay form, narrate one occasion for a friend or peer group which describes and shares your emotions as a spectator or player when you felt very special because of your participation. Be certain to include all the details about the occasion which are relevant to your attitude.

2. Many people argue that the grading system (ABCDEF) is better than a pass/fail system because it promotes competition among students. Persuade your reader in an essay that this competition can produce both negative and positive results which can directly affect your attitude toward life in general.

3. Many sociologists feel that where we grow up has a strong influence in our lives. Discuss how this statement applies to your life using specific examples for support.
APPENDIX D

Student Essay Placement Chart
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>English ACT</th>
<th>SAT Verbal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>060</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>050</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Check if no test scores are available ___

Placement: 050 060 110 (Circle one)

Level: 4 3 2 (Circle one)

Is this a placement change? Yes No (Circle one)

Readers' initials: _____ _____ (_____)


**Writing Workshop Report.** (The Writing Workshop, The Ohio State University, Department of English, 1977).