Grammar: forward to basics; an analysis of the ineffectiveness of formal grammar instruction with a proposal for changes in grammar teaching and a preliminary feasibility investigation.

Chad Clinton Osborne
University of Massachusetts Amherst

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GRAMMAR: FORWARD TO BASICS
AN ANALYSIS OF THE INEFFECTIVENESS OF FORMAL GRAMMAR
INSTRUCTION WITH A PROPOSAL FOR CHANGES IN GRAMMAR
TEACHING AND A PRELIMINARY FEASIBILITY INVESTIGATION

A Dissertation Presented
By
Chad Clinton Osborne

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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GRAMMAR: FORWARD TO BASICS
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND DEDICATION

Many people played a supportive role in my writing this dissertation. Most instrumental in helping on a personal level were my wife and four children, who allowed me time and quiet for concentrated work, encouraged me in the writing process, and showed not a little amazement when the dissertation was completed. Special acknowledgement is also due my three committee members, whose substantive and editorial comments stimulated many improvements between first and last draft, and whose patience and encouragement helped me in the difficult early stages. The many teachers who have interacted with me about the ideas in the following pages, particularly in my "Begone Dull Grammar!" course, stimulated much of the motivation necessary to write this dissertation. And I firmly believe that I could not have completed this project without the prayers and encouragement of Christian friends at the Pilgrim Baptist Church in North Brookfield, Massachusetts, and in the campus Christian Fellowship at Worcester State College. To all these people I acknowledge my debt of gratitude and dedicate this dissertation to those schoolchildren who, because of some teachers' use of this reconceived approach to grammar, may suffer less of the dull and ineffective forms of language study which I have sought to show should and can be replaced.
ABSTRACT

Grammar: Forward To Basics

An Analysis of the Ineffectiveness of Formal Grammar Instruction with a Proposal for Changes in Grammar Teaching and a Preliminary Feasibility Investigation

September 1977

Chad Clinton Osborne, B.A., Yale University M.A., Stanford University, Ed. D. University of Massachusetts

Directed by: Professor Earl Seidman

The purpose of this study was to lay a foundation for changing the views and methods of English teachers who want to or have to teach grammar. Nearly a century of educational research has failed to prove positive relationships between those narrow means of abstract sentence analysis known as formal grammar and the wider array of usage, mechanics, and communication skills which many teachers and citizens mean by the term grammar. Based on a variety of research and language study sources, a variety of explanations are given for the inadequacy of formal grammar instruction, and, at the same time, a basis is established in theory and empirical research for alternative means for teaching grammar. The kinds and causes of students' errors are reviewed and seen to be rooted in performance features outside the reach of grammatical instruction. Discussion of sentence thought and meaning and syntactic manipulation for logical and rhetorical effects are highlighted as empirically proven means for
error reduction and syntactic growth.

Integrated with relevant findings from research literature are a number of points from the history of grammar teaching, showing the historical tradition of grammar teaching to be strikingly different from the usual notion of traditional grammar teaching. Considerations of meaning, logic and rhetoric, as well as of structure, are seen to have sturdier historical roots than do the reductionist grammar texts which classify only formal characteristics of words and sentences. The study also shows that school children have already mastered the syntactic competence described by both traditional or modern formal grammars, usually by the age of four, thus helping to explain why such instruction does not affect student language performance. In contrast to early mastery of syntax, the study cites evidence that semantic competence develops more slowly, a competence which the simplistic and shallow sentences of grammar texts overlook.

Incorporating conclusions from Vygotsky, Piaget, and Bruner, a theoretical foundation is developed for basing sentence study and production on the relation between thought and language. This foundation stresses meaning, motivation, and manipulation of thought and language--rather than analysis of sentences which relies on abstract terminology and rules. From this empirical and conceptual base, several criteria are developed and used to assess grammar textbooks,
revealing their inadequacies. Seven principles, explained with examples of operational implications, are then proposed as the basis for reconceiving and reforming grammar teaching. The results of an implementation questionnaire indicate how each of these seven principles are followed by teachers who have taken a three credit in-service course called "Begone Dull Grammar!" The principles stress having students produce, manipulate and study sentences with pointed meanings, using a variety of single sentence composition forms, and integrating the sentence work with other aspects of both language study and the broader areas of the English curriculum. Teachers in the study reported implementing these changes in grammar teaching to a substantial degree, over 80% indicating each principle was implemented either somewhat, mostly, or always. Thus conclusions based on preliminary data suggest English teachers can be persuaded to replace traditional approaches to formal grammar instruction when given reasons to do so and alternative means to pursue grammar objectives. Slightly less than 20% of the teachers reported encountering barriers to implementing the proposed alternatives to formal grammar, despite their initial estimate that external expectations would be far more potent a force. When basics are taught in our schools they ought not to rely upon the discredited content and methods of formal grammar.
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CHAPTER I
THE PROBLEM IN CONCEPTUAL FOCUS

If there is a slogan which characterizes education in the 1970's, it is "Back-to-Basics." Gaining momentum from declining scores on national standardized tests, the "Back-to-Basics" movement has given support to those who call for a greater emphasis on or a return to the teaching of formal grammar.¹ For varied and complex reasons, grammar has been considered an educational "basic" by both public and professional, and, in spite of nearly a century of research which has shown that formal grammar study has very little if any effect on students' writing, reading, or speech, it is still considered basic to the acquisition of those skills. In their eagerness to respond to the national concern, English teachers in many classrooms have sought in grammar a solution to the apparent decline in writing skills. But to do this is to ignore the results of varied and extensive research and to commit the teaching of English to a reactionary position. Thus, English teachers are faced

¹"Formal grammar," as used throughout this dissertation, denotes a system of abstract terminology and rules to describe the structure of sentences, phrases, and words, whether the system is Latinate, structural, or transformational. Formal grammar does not include such basic skills as usage, punctuation, and spelling, which many teachers and citizens may mean by their use of the term grammar.
with a dilemma. On the one hand, it is reasonable to assume that grammar will continue to be given a central place in the English curriculum; on the other hand, the teaching of grammar will remain ineffective if it is taught in the manner advocated by present textbooks, curriculum guides, and many teachers.

The prospects that grammar study will not simply be abandoned rest on several assumptions which at first seem simple and direct: students need grammar study; it works; it's not too hard to teach, and it can be easily graded. Upon closer examination these suppositions reveal several false assumptions and more than a little ignorance. It is in the case of attitudes toward the usefulness of grammar instruction as Montaigne said: "Nothing is so firmly believed as what we least know."

"Students need it." Students make errors, or what more enlightened linguists would call inappropriate choices. This is an undisputed fact, although room for disagreement exists regarding some items which English teachers are accustomed to correcting in students' writing and speech. Error reduction has traditionally been the most widely assumed objective of grammar study, and therefore the errors students make seem to many to give unquestionable evidence of the need for grammar study. The trouble with this assumption is not so much in the confusion of grammar and
usage that is common to many teachers,\(^2\) as in the larger confusion in which a great range of objectives for effective communication—including mastery of standard usage, mechanics, and sentence structure—are associated with the particular means of formal grammatical analysis, relying on abstract terminology and rules. Many teachers assume that a strategy so narrow as learning the parts of speech, a central feature of traditional formal grammar, will result in improvements in the larger meaning they ascribe to the term grammar, in which many English teachers would include whatever they would correct in a student's writing or speech. This confusion of the means of identifying parts of speech and ends makes clear thinking about grammar teaching difficult. Thus the broad sense of grammar may readily be translated into a narrow conception and accompanying pedagogy. This is a problem that has surrounded grammar almost from the inception of the term (Michael, 1970, pp. 24-6). In analyzing the assumption that students need grammar it is important to clarify what is meant by grammar. This clarification shows the disparity between formal grammar and what many teachers assume they are doing when they teach grammar.

The Greek origin of the word grammar denoted both

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\(^2\)The distinction linguists make is that grammar is the study of the forms and structures of a language system, while usage is the study of a variety of ways language is used by its people, with particular emphasis on judgment of social acceptability.
"letters" in the sense of an alphabet and "letters" in the sense of literature; the range of grammar conceptions seems to cover just this wide a spectrum. The tendency has been to conceive of grammar in terms of broad intentions, yet the tendency has also been to restrict its means to the classification of words and word-groups in sentences, using terminology and rules to denote parts of speech and syntactical structures in the sentence. Ian Michael has said that grammar "is perhaps the vaguest term in the schoolmaster's, if not the scholar's, vocabulary" (1970, p. 37).

When no qualifying word is used with the term grammar in this dissertation, it is intended to refer to the broad and rather inclusive sense of the clear and appropriate use of language that encompasses such concerns as spelling, punctuation, usage, syntax, diction, and style. The breadth of this use of grammar is consistent both with the meaning of the term in its origins (letters, in the sense of both the alphabet and literature) and with the way that many contemporary teachers and citizens use the term to include a wide variety of language skills. Defining several of the qualified types of grammar different from this broad sense may prevent subsequent confusion as to what is meant in the various uses of grammar in this dissertation.

First of all, this dissertation builds a foundation for practices to replace formal grammar. Formal grammar refers to any system using abstract terminology and rules to
describe the structure of language in general, and sentences in particular. The term formal grammar is thus meant to include traditional (or Latinate) grammar and the two principal modern grammars, structural grammar and transformational grammar. While as brief a definition for these grammars as is given here cannot be comprehensive, these three types of formal grammar do have characteristics which distinguish them from each other, even though these qualities provide an incomplete description.

Traditional grammar refers to analysis of language, especially written language, by categorizing words as certain parts of speech and syntactic constructions, and to the use of abstract names for these categories to prescribe rules for "correct" or preferred customs of language use. This type of linguistic classification began with Greek grammarians, in contrast to the two modern grammars which were developed as a result of linguistic research. Structural grammar refers to the analysis of the sounds (phonology), meaningful units (morphology), and the combination of these linguistic forms (syntax), particularly based on spoken language. Structural grammar classifies parts of speech, for instance, by characteristic word endings or inflections and by typical syntactic position in the word order of sentences, rather than by traditional definitions of the functions of words, as "a noun names a person, place, or thing." Transformational (or generative) grammar refers
to the description of phrase structure rules for simple declarative or kernel sentences, and transformational rules to describe formulas for converting kernel sentences into other grammatical structures—all as part of an effort to provide a theoretical description of the sentence-producing and understanding capacity of a normal native speaker above the age of four.

All three of these types of grammar are formal grammars in that they use numerous abstract terms and rules in their methods of analysis. Thus when the claim is made that no study has shown success in using instruction in formal grammar to improve any aspect of students' writing or speech, the claim is meant to apply equally to any type of formal grammar.

A further distinction refers to the purpose underlying the construction of any grammar, whether it is simply to describe actual uses of the language, descriptive grammar, or to prescribe rules for the best, the correct, or most appropriate use of language, prescriptive grammar. Chapter II discusses the history of grammar teaching, indicating the origins of prescriptive grammar in eighteenth-century England, and showing that traditional grammar, as we know it through school textbooks, derives from this misguided eighteenth-century effort to prescribe and permanently fix the "correct forms" of English. Modern linguistics has tended to utilize structural and transformational grammars
for descriptive purposes, yet many teachers have preferred to use the prescriptive texts that utilize traditional grammar, even though linguists agree that traditional grammar provides an inaccurate and inadequate analysis of the English language. To summarize, then, the broad term grammar will be used to imply the various pragmatic goals or ends of language study, while formal grammar and the other qualified uses of grammar will refer to specific means employed to pursue these ends.

The wide variety of ends and means concerning various aspects of language study and skill improvement means that in much writing and in teacher-talk about grammar, basic terms and meanings are seldom stated clearly. Nelson Francis (1964) offered three definitions of grammar in an attempt to bring some clarity to the picture: Grammar 1 is the form of behavior of putting words into patterns in order to convey larger meanings; all speakers above the age of five or six are able to use language's complex forms of organization without need for self-conscious discussion and any labelling of language patterns and transformations. Grammar 2 is the branch of linguistic science which is concerned with the description and analysis of formal language patterns. Grammar 3 is "linguistic etiquette," or usage and "correctness" appropriate to an audience and intention. Teachers, in fact, can use the term "grammar" to mean so many aspects of language that their definition might indeed
be "anything that an English teacher could correct on a student's paper or in a student's speaking."

English teachers seldom give such attention to analyzing what they mean by "grammar," or to specifying the particular features of language expression and interpretation over which they want grammar to help students develop control. Rather, they tend to accept an implicit definition of grammar: learning the parts of speech. And since many students don't know their parts of speech, the purpose (as well as means) for teaching grammar becomes "to learn the parts of speech." While learning to use more correct or effective language in speaking and writing may be an assumed goal, learning the parts of speech denotes this same thing to many teachers.

A sort of circular logic comes into play regarding the identification of parts of speech, a logic which also involves confusion of means and ends. The pattern is often set in motion early in the school year when the teacher asks a question using parts of speech terminology, and finds that a succession of students cannot give the correct response. They seem to have either forgotten, not learned well, or simply not have been taught their "grammar" (i.e., parts of speech). Teachers have related this occurrence to me numerous times, even regarding the most common parts of speech--noun, verb, adjective, and adverb. The circular logic then ensues: if students don't know their parts of
speech, then they need to be taught parts of speech. This, of course, begs the question of whether learning parts of speech will enable students to improve any important dimension of language control and skill.

The argument that because students don't "know" parts of speech they should therefore be taught (and re-taught) them ignores the fact that parts of speech instruction is not the end, but a means to some presumed end or goal. When pressed, teachers commonly say they teach parts of speech "so that we have common terms to use in talking about writing," or "because it makes it easier to explain about errors and rules to avoid them." Pressing on with "what will this enable students to do" type questions, one soon finds the teacher is talking about goals that have nothing at all to do with the nature of the formal grammar they are teaching.

At least linguistic researchers and writers recognize the insufficiency of descriptive or prescriptive grammatical analysis as means to improve any basic language skills. But they have tended simply to narrow the basis for justifying grammar in the English curriculum, rather than seeking to identify new grammar means to pursue the older, broader grammar goals. Thus some now claim that grammar is simply "a description of how language works" (Judy, 1974, p. 36). Others argue that "... the superseding of vague and sloppy thinking (traditional grammar) by clear and precise thinking
(structural grammar) is an exciting experience in and of itself" (Francis, 1954, p. 23). Ross and Ross see practical claims as irrelevant, too: "For the teacher, the new English promises great rewards because it provides a true subject matter which will meet the 'learning about language' objective of the language arts curriculum" (1970, p. 174).

On the one hand, linguists and grammar researchers now offer a vastly reduced "for-its-own-sake" argument, and no claim that the study of grammar terms and rules will necessarily improve any aspect of language performance. Yet at the same time, partly under the "Back-to-Basics" pendulum swing in public attitudes toward education, teachers and English departments show a disastrous inclination to do more of the same forms of grammar study that have already been proved to be ineffective. "Back-to-Basics" proponents should actually be concerned to displace as a frill any form of and role for grammar which does not help students to improve their usage, spelling, punctuation, flexibility of syntax and vocabulary, and overall clarity and effectiveness of oral and written communication. This would mean heeding the conclusions of research and avoiding rule and terminology grammar approaches—whether they be traditional, structural, or transformational-generative. It seems highly unlikely that grammar advocates would move in this direction, however, given how little effect past research has had on how teachers see and determine the role
of grammar in the English curriculum.

Declines in test scores. An important force behind the view that students need grammar instruction, in addition to the fact of errors in students' writing and speech and the circular logic supporting parts of speech instruction, is the decline of scores on SAT and other tests. These score declines provide a contemporary and highly visible support that some grammar proponents cite as clear evidence that students need to be taught grammar, even more rigorously.

The decline in student scores on Scholastic Aptitude Tests, which are based on the standard scale of from 200 to 800 points, began among 1964 high school graduates. The verbal aptitude scores have dropped 44 points, from an average of 478 in 1964 to 434 in 1976, with the largest decline—a 10 point drop—reported for 1975. Another indication of decline in students' language abilities which has troubled English teachers was the National Writing Assessment conducted by the National Assessment of Educational Progress. This survey of writing skills was administered first in 1970, and again in 1974, to 10,000 students in three age groups—9, 13, and 17 year olds. The test involved writing essay answers to questions. The NAEP report was widely reported by national news services in early November 1975. The AP lead ran: "A study released today indicates American teenagers are losing their ability to communicate clearly through written English."
During the period of these score declines there was widespread curriculum change in English, particularly involving the replacement of homogeneous high school English courses, which tended to have grammar components of varying proportion, by electives, which tended to feature literature as the focal point. Consequently, many teachers and others assumed a causative connection between the score declines and the presumed decrease in grammar instruction. Either explicitly or implicitly, many assumed that greater knowledge of the terms and rules of grammar could reverse this decline. But knowledge of grammar terminology or rules is not at issue, since students do not need such knowledge in order to do any part of these tests. No grammatical terminology is either used or tested on the SAT or on the new Test of Standard Written English. Some of the usage test measures students' ability to identify errors which teachers have long assumed could be remedied by the teaching of grammar—errors in subject-verb agreement, sentence fragments, proper verb forms, sentence fragments, and pronoun-antecedent agreement. But research has consistently failed to support the assumption that formal grammar instruction could reduce these errors. Similarly, the NAEP Writing Assessment report follows its findings with several specific recommendations, one of which urges "that educators recognize teaching grammar is not teaching writing." Further weighing against the assumption that a renewed emphasis on
grammar is needed, College Board President Sidney P. Marland has stated flatly that "at this time we have no substantial evidence that enables us to attribute the score decline to any single cause or any particular set of causes" (January 1976 ATP News). This statement was part of a preliminary report of the Advisory Panel on the SAT Score Decline, a group commissioned by the College Board to spend two years assessing various explanations for the SAT score decline and to report sometime after October 1977.

The conclusion that these score declines are due to what is or not taught in the English curriculum may in fact be false; forces beyond the teacher's control must be seen as at least contributory causes. Robert B. Zajonc of the University of Michigan raises one interesting possibility (Travis, 1976). Zajonc's extensive and varied supporting data indicate that the more children there are in a family, the closer their ages, and the later in sibling birth order the children are, then the less interaction they have with mature language users, and, consequently, the less developed their verbal aptitude becomes. The data supporting this thesis includes figures showing that during the early 1960's, when SAT scores hit their peak, many students who took the SAT's were first- and second-born children of the "baby boom" years. The subsequent score declines reflect with remarkable precision the increased family size in the post-war years, and the increased proportion of students later in
the birth order of larger families taking the SAT's. Furthermore, Zajonc projects a rise in SAT scores beginning about 1980, because proportionally more of the children born in the early 1960's will be first-borns from smaller families, and because the demographic trend is toward smaller families with increased time spans between births.

If Zajonc is right, those who have called for renewed emphasis on grammar teaching may take the credit for the rise in SAT scores—a rise which might actually be attributable to a shift in demographic characteristics. Although Zajonc's conclusions are somewhat speculative, both the rise in scores of junior high school students on the Iowa Basic Skills Test and the NAEP Writing Assessment's report of improved scores among 9-year-olds lends further credence to these explanations. A close look at the tests shows that a knowledge of basic mechanics has not declined among students, that the SAT does not test grammar, and that nothing on either terminology or rules is included in either the verbal part of the SAT or in the newer usage section. In fact, assumptions to the contrary are directly contradicted by statements from the very same testing agencies which develop and administer these tests and report their scores.

In the score declines we have seen a case where one might believe that formal grammar instruction could remedy the problems; in reality, one can document no connection between formal grammar and the tests. As I will review in
Chapter II, grammar proponents have an ancient history of setting out to accomplish very broad goals, and then proceeding to provide extremely narrow content and methods. Like so many other justifications, the recent score declines, apparent support for those who claim students need to be taught grammar, simply do not hold up under close examination. But will English teachers make this closer examination? In view of the negligible effects on teachers from a substantial body of research evidence against the assumptions that grammar instruction leads to improvement in writing, the prospects are not encouraging.

"It works:" English teachers and grammar research. Rarely in the history of education have the claims for any aspect of the curriculum been so consistently repudiated by research, yet so persistently maintained in practice, as has the role of formal grammar in the English language arts curriculum. In a National Council of Teachers of English guidebook to composition research, which the Second Handbook of Research on Teaching (Blount, 1973) cited as indispensable, Braddock, et al. declared that

In view of the widespread agreement of research studies based on many types of students and teachers, the conclusion can be stated in strong and unqualified terms: the teaching of formal grammar has a negligible or, because it usually displaces some instruction and practice in actual composition, even a harmful effect on the improvement of writing. (1963, pp. 37-8)

The conclusion stated by Braddock, et al. is corroborated
and expanded by reviews of research in the *Encyclopedia of Educational Research* (Searles and Carlsen, 1960), by Meckel (1963), by Bateman and Zidonis (1966), by Mellon (1971), and by O'Hare (1973).

Not only in composition, but in other claimed or hoped-for goals and effects used to justify the teaching of grammar, research consistently fails to support the study of grammar terminology and rules as having positive effectiveness. Studies summarized by Searles and Carlsen (1960) establish the insufficiency and ineffectiveness of formal grammar instruction in aiding all the following areas which at some time have been claimed as the improvements that grammar teaching can produce:

- disciplining the mind  
- interpreting literature  
- improving usage correctness  
- higher achieving in study of foreign language(s)  
- improving reading comprehension  
- improving language behavior generally  
- improving punctuation and spelling correctness.

The devastating one-sidedness of all this research stands in stark contrast to the very common finding in educational research of "no significant difference" between experimental treatments. Why then do many teachers still cite these discredited reasons for teaching grammar, and why do so many now seem willing to return to teaching grammar, despite the
clear research evidence that formal grammar practices are ineffective?

A primary reason for English teachers' ignoring grammar research may simply be that they are ignorant of it. Incredible as it seems considering the English methods and graduate research courses that so many English teachers have taken, only four out of over 150 in-service English teachers I have taught from 1970-1977 have ever read any grammar research summaries or been told of their conclusions. If this group is representative, and I have no reason to assume that it is not, the very simple step of reprinting or otherwise assigning and discussing summaries of grammar research ought to become part of the undergraduate and graduate teacher education courses for English teachers.

Simply getting teachers to see what the research says is not enough, however. Again judging from the sample of about 150 English teachers who in my courses have read and responded to this research, several characteristic responses may be anticipated. Some teachers have expressed relief. The research gave some reasons to believe they were not to blame for their students' not achieving the grammar knowledge or presumably connected skills. Other teachers believed that the research summaries were biased. In elaborating on this reaction orally and in writing, they explained that they didn't trust the research because all of it moved in one direction. They felt there were probably
errors in the studies or traits in the students studied which would render the results not applicable, and they criticized the summaries for not pointing out positive alternatives. A third, much larger proportion of teachers has expressed mild surprise, but said the research wasn't likely to affect them simply because, as they judged it, they had to teach grammar— they were expected to do so by their department head or community—and while they were open to better and more interesting ways to teach grammar, they weren't likely to remove grammar from their curriculum.

"It's not too hard to teach, and it can be easily graded." Teaching grammar as it exists in textbooks fits neatly into the "path of least resistance" syndrome. The textbooks provide the secure subject matter of mathematics-like definitions and rules, prescribing right or wrong, in contrast to the ambiguities of literary study and creative writing. Many textbooks are available. The teacher need only stay one step ahead of the students, which is probably common for many first year teachers, since few have had a course in teaching grammar. Exercises have simple right or wrong answers, easily graded, with no necessity for the teacher to evaluate a stack of papers. These are all notable forces, especially when aided by the belief that students need formal grammar instruction, and by the assumption that it works—even though student errors persist, despite such instruction—and further by the lack of exposure to
research on the effectiveness of grammar teaching for the goals which teachers hope to achieve, or for the objectives which appear in the introductory section of their grammar textbooks. Moreover, a teacher who concentrates on teaching formal grammar is not likely to be challenged by the department head or supervisors. Formal grammar has a conservative appeal based upon misconceptions about the unanimity and credentials of the tradition, discussed in Chapter II.

Even in the face of these forces and the false assumptions which support the continued dominance of formal grammar in the English curriculum, one can take an optimistic view that if certain conditions are met, many English teachers can and will replace ineffective aspects of their grammar teaching. The conditions which may be prerequisite to reform in grammar teaching provide the basis for the approach to the problem. First are two conditions whose presence may make the other specifications easier to achieve: in order to reform their grammar curriculum, teachers need to perceive some degree of dullness in the teaching and study of grammar. Also, they may need to possess some degree of achievement motivation—in contrast to the motive to follow the easiest way, regardless of the outcome—so that the teacher wants to find better ways to teach grammar.

Given these two preconditions, teachers may be likely to reform their grammar teaching if they:
- know what research has indicated about grammar instruction;
- understand the actual as opposed to the assumed tradition behind grammar teaching;
- comprehend some of the psychological and linguistic reasons why one might have predicted that formal grammar instruction would fail to achieve the objectives that are presumed for it;
- become aware of alternative means by which to achieve many grammar objectives;
- have support for rethinking the methods and aims of their grammar curriculum and for planning for change in their teaching.

Laying the basis for accomplishing these conditions and reporting on pilot trials by teachers who, to some degree, have met these conditions comprise the resolution proposed in the following pages for the dilemma facing English teachers: a variety of assumptions and pressures assure that grammar will continue to be taught, yet the formal grammars available in school textbooks are quite unlikely to accomplish objectives hoped for them.

The plan of the dissertation. The approach to the problem of providing a suitable basis for persuading English teachers to revise their grammar curriculum follows a logical path. While the scope is conceptual, tying together theoretical notions and descriptions of practical means,
many features of the synthesis proposed in Chapter V derive from empirical studies in which approaches tested as alternatives to formal grammar were shown to have superior effectiveness. Chapter II thus highlights such means as syntactic manipulation and thought and meaning discussion as empirically proven means for achieving certain grammar goals. The evidence for rejecting formal, particularly traditional, grammar is also based on historical research showing the relatively recent origins of traditional grammar and the distortion of the actual tradition represented in the so-called traditional grammar.

Chapter III reviews language development studies to provide extensive documentation for the scope of students' mastery of the skills which formal grammar tries to develop, thus helping to explain the lack of positive effects from formal grammar instruction. However, empirical studies in themselves do not provide sufficient grounds for reconceiving grammar instruction. Intellectual and conceptual roots which most systems for teaching formal grammar lack are established in Chapter III. These insights are consistent with empirical data, in many cases suggesting the kinds of theoretical notions that give rise to empirical studies.

Based on the combination of empirical and conceptual evidence offered in Chapters II and III, Chapter IV develops several criteria for a critical appraisal of grammar textbooks. This assessment offers further support for a new
synthesis of approaches to replace formal grammar as the means to attempt achieving grammar objectives. Thus an empirical and conceptual foundation, and a search for curricular materials consistent with this foundation, lead to the proposed synthesis described in Chapter V, with supportive summaries of English teachers' assessments of their implementation of this synthesis introduced to them in a three credit graduate in-service course. Conclusions and implications from the pilot implementation are discussed in the final chapter.
CHAPTER II
RESEARCH ON GRAMMAR TEACHING AND ON THE GRAMMAR TRADITION

Grammar Research

The corrective or editorial goal of grammar. As noted in Chapter I, there is not even a single study supporting the contention that instruction in grammatical rules and terminology leads to improvement in language use. This is not to say that teachers should forget about trying to improve their students' use of language. It simply means that formal grammar cannot be expected to provide the means for achieving this aim. In regards to the particular goal of reducing students' inappropriate choices in language use, it seems legitimate to assume that teachers and parents have a right to expect that young people will reduce the frequency of their inappropriate choices in writing or speaking as a result of their years of schooling. This expectation is one of the forces ensuring that some kind of grammar teaching will continue in the schools. If a new kind of grammar is to replace formal grammar, then it must offer promise for helping students overcome their errors in transcriptional mechanics and inappropriate choices of usage. Approaches which simply move on to other goals, such as
"creative expression," at the neglect of increased mastery in "correct" uses of language simply invite the reaction which some schools have experienced in the "Back-to-Basics" movement. Fortunately, the same research that establishes the ineffectiveness of formal grammar for reducing inappropriate choices and errors also reveals alternative approaches which have had greater effectiveness in direct comparison studies. These alternatives are easily overlooked if one reads the research, concentrating only on the issue of the effectiveness of formal grammar. The purpose in examining the research is thus double-edged: to identify grammar approaches shown to be ineffective in dealing with errors and inappropriate choices, and to contrast these to more effective approaches that need to be included in a new synthesis to replace formal grammar. While much more besides error reduction may be achieved by a reconceived grammar, it would still appear to be possible to increase students' mastery of standard usage—perhaps the most frequently cited goal and commonly held meaning of grammar.

**Error-oriented studies.** The notion that the purpose of grammar was to reduce errors\(^1\) held its strongest sway in the

\(^1\)The term *error* has traditionally been used in language studies to refer both to obvious transcripive mistakes in spelling and punctuation and to more general weaknesses including omitted words, ambiguity of pronoun and participial reference, and inappropriate choices in usage. Since the studies reviewed in this chapter use *error* in this broad sense, the practice will not be followed in this chapter, as
1930's during the height of the "functional grammar" movement. During this time the terms grammar and usage became interchangeable, though the usage goal had become identified with grammar in the eighteenth century (Pooley, 1974, pp. 8-9). Functional grammar sought to limit grammar instruction to usage prescriptions which dealt with errors most frequently found in students' writing. Proponents of this approach, and there are many among present-day English teachers, claimed to have an unarguable defense for the utility of grammar instruction. But the research of the period proved them wrong and led to several findings important for reconceiving the nature of grammar instruction.

A three stage sequence observable through hindsight begins with four studies, by Symonds (1931), Catherwood (1932), Cutwright (1934), and Crawford and Royer (1935). These studies showed clear results that overt rule learning is less successful in changing language behavior than are repetitive oral drills alternating between "right" and "wrong" forms in actual sentences. Cutwright's study (1934) found writing correct forms followed by reading them aloud to be superior. Catherwood (1932) also showed that of the 93 per cent of seventh grade students who could correct a grammatical mistake, only 8 per cent could state the

it will elsewhere in this dissertation, of preferring the phrase inappropriate choices when more than strictly transcriptive errors are at issue.
grammatical rule involved; she also found an extremely low correlation between knowledge of subject and predicate and the ability to correct sentence fragments. It is evident that students were using their intrinsic competence and listening for what "sounded right" in order to make most corrections.

A second stage of findings in "functional grammar" research is based on five studies, by Evans (1939), Milligan (1939), Frogner (1939), Butterfield (1945), and Harris (1962)—all of which emphasized the superiority of approaches utilizing "thought and meaning," rather than grammar terminology, usage prescriptions, and right-wrong practice drills. These approaches had the common feature of referring to the actual language of the sentences examined and of using everyday terms in discussing ways to improve the "sound" or correctness of sentences.

No study in this period, 1931-1962, found superior results from those comparison student groups who studied grammatical terms, such as parts of speech, or rules, such as punctuation and usage prescriptions. This verdict was unanimous. The initial group of studies supports the approach of oral practice that alternates right and wrong forms—using everyday language rather than any grammatical terms. The second group of studies moved away from right-wrong drill practice, finding improved results from utilizing discussion and revision of sentences in terms of their
thought and meaning, again avoiding use of grammatical terms and rules. These studies showed superior results from having students write their own sentences, then closely examine the meaning of the sentences and think about how correct it looked and sounded. This aspect of having students work with their own sentences was particularly stressed by Frogner:

Synthesis, not analysis, was the basis of the difficulty from the point of view of expression. . . . The results suggest the importance of an approach to the problem with a view to the synthesis of thoughts into sentences rather than analysis into grammatical elements. (1933, pp. 748-749)

The thought approach thus was a kind of sentence composition program in which students were helped to clarify and expand thoughts, and relate one part of a thought clearly to another, with appropriate punctuation to indicate both spoken pause and meaning. Frogner noted that students are often confused by grammatical analysis, as shown by their justifying the use of adverb clauses as sentences because they have a subject and predicate. In contrast to the use of grammatical analysis, she stressed the need to emphasize the accurate expression of thought relationships and to recognize the value of subordinate elements as contributors to the major idea, which they qualify, refine, or further develop.

The third stage in this sequence of "functional grammar" research is based on studies by Werner and Guiler
(1933) and by Karp (1942). These two studies added a refinement to understanding how the natural language thought approach could be applied. They indicated that individualized instruction on errors actually committed by students, as compared to mass instruction on lists of common errors, is at least as effective and uses far less class time.

It must be viewed as a positive finding of the research that there are ways to improve the correctness of students' writing, but that the successful approaches do not involve grammatical rules or terminology, the essence of any formal grammar. Rather, the improvement in correctness has been shown to result from direct explanations, private conversations between teacher and student, and brief oral drills contrasting desirable with undesirable forms in sentences. However, in order to determine which usage items are acceptable and which are not, teachers cannot safely rely on grammar textbooks, according to the research of Malmstrom (1959), Womack (1959), and Pooley (1974). Pooley includes lists of forms that are accepted and those not accepted, based on writers' and dictionaries' uses of language, and putting priority on those unaccepted forms that tend to be met with the greatest social disapproval. An adaptation of these lists for content recommendations and diagnostic approaches to individual errors is included in the appendix.

One issue related to all the findings of formal grammar's ineffectiveness is whether the studies have been
testing students who know grammar; it may well be speculated that many students in the studies had either not learned or forgotten formal grammar, despite extensive instruction. Searles and Carlsen cite two studies related to this issue:

Perhaps most damning of all the studies of the teaching of grammar are those dealing with the retention of grammatical knowledge. Knowing that her students had had extensive instruction in grammar from grade VI on, Miller (1951) tested the grammatical understandings of her group of selected seniors. She found that no single item of grammatical information was securely held by even a majority of her class. Macaulay (1947) tested seniors in the Scottish schools on their grammatical knowledge. These students had come through a slow and carefully presented sequence of grammatical information. For admission to the upper schools they had demonstrated their proficiency in grammar on a test. He discovered that the knowledge they had demonstrated earlier in their development had almost completely evaporated. Grammar has been taught, and the casual observer in the schools inevitably comes to the conclusion that it has been taught well. The inoculation has not taken. (1960, p. 461)

The nature and causes of errors. The issue of whether students who actually do learn formal grammar, if they can be found, would reduce their frequency of errors seems less important in light of the non-grammatical basis for most errors. Mellon noted that "despite their preoccupation with error-remediation in the grammar curriculum, very little creative thinking has been done on the diverse nature and cause of error" (1971, p. 73). Actually, finding the kinds of errors is not a difficult task; many studies, including state (Massachusetts) and national assessments in 1974, have
indicated the types of errors found most frequently in student writing. Mina Shaughnessy (1977) has made a monumental study recently. But the types of errors have been catalogued long before. Potter (1922) found the following errors, listed in decreasing order of commonality: unclear clauses, omission of words, and faulty pronoun reference. Pressey (1925) found half the errors reported were in the failure to make proper sentence division--fragments, stringy sentences, and omission of words--with the other main error being faulty pronoun reference. Symonds and Daringer (1930) reported ambiguous pronoun reference and misplaced modification as common errors. Symonds and Hinton (1932) cited word choice, word order, omitted words, sentences with no idea worth expressing, and incomplete, jumbled, and run-on sentences. Frogner (1933) found the run-on sentence was the most common error. The 1974 national assessment of writing found an increase in awkwardness, run-on sentences, and shorter "primer-like" sentences among 17- and 13-year-olds, but 9-year-olds showing improvement in attempting more complex sentences and seeming to move toward a more sophisticated style. In Massachusetts, subject-verb agreement was the only consistently reported error.

Causes of these errors may be multiple, but the previously cited research indicates that the lack of grammar instruction was not among the causes. The run-on sentence
may be linked to what Piaget (1953, p. 171 ff.) and other cognitive psychologists have established as the predominance of co-ordination in thinking, perceiving things as basically either similar or different, prior to the formal operations stage that begins about age 12. With formal operational thinking, we begin to see an increased ability to put ideas in superordinate and subordinate positions. This is consistent with language development data, especially the findings of Hunt (1964) showing that increasing length and depth of subordination were consistent features of increased maturity. In part, the run-on error may be explained as a developmentally more basic style of thinking, either appropriate to younger students or something of a lingering effect from earlier years in older students.

The run-on sentence and sentence fragment may also be more in the nature of a punctuation problem; that is, they simply reflect the confusion between a vocal full stop (period) and a pause and half-drop (comma). Another factor may be the predominance of predication in the basic level of thinking, inner speech, which is explained in the next chapter. Whether due to development, punctuation, or the nature of inner speech, run-on and fragment sentences are basically thought and meaning problems rather than syntax problems. This interpretation is also consistent with the failure of grammar instruction to decrease these errors.

Pronoun reference is probably an error whose nature is
linked to "egocentricity," since the pronoun referent is clear to the writer, but not to the reader. It may also reflect inner speech, in which subjects are omitted (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 139)—meaning that the specification of a subject is a more difficult task in transforming thought into clear sentences. The other kind of error, omitted or repeated words, would seem nearly always to stem from a lack of attention, rather than a lack of knowledge. If students were to proofread aloud, perhaps running a finger under each word while reading, most would probably spot and supply the missing words—as well as correct some punctuation errors, as noted by both Moffett (1968b) and Pooley (1974). One reason that many errors may be corrected by proofreading is that when a real message or idea is involved in language use, the forging and communicating of ideas at a content level is too important for many students to be able to concentrate on the form of their statement. That would necessitate a second, closer look once the thought has already been expressed, in order to reveal to a student the "careless" errors of a written statement.

The fact that many of the "errors" that concern teachers occur in student writing, rather than speech, may reflect some difficult aspects of the shift from speech to writing. Vygotsky describes several of these difficulties which help both to explain causes of error and to justify giving close attention to writing sentence thoughts, which a
reconceived grammar can make more central.

It is the abstract quality of written language that is the main stumbling block . . . Even its minimal development requires a high level of abstraction. . . . Writing is also speech without an interlocutor, addressed to an absent or an imaginary person or to no one in particular—a situation new and strange to the child. . . . In conversation, every sentence is prompted by a motive. Desire or need lead to request, question to answer, bewilderment to explanation. . . . The motives for writing are more abstract, more intellectualized, further removed from immediate needs. In written speech we are obliged to create the situation, to represent it to ourselves. This demands detachment from the actual situation. . . . In writing we must take cognizance of the sound structure of each word, dissect it, and reproduce it in alphabetical symbols, which we must have studied and memorized before. . . . Written language demands conscious work because its relationship to inner speech is different from that of oral speech: the latter precedes inner speech in the course of development, while written speech follows inner speech and presupposes its existence (the act of writing is a translation from inner speech). . . . Inner speech is condensed, abbreviated speech. Written speech is deployed to its fullest extent, more complete than oral speech. Inner speech is almost entirely predicative because the situation, the subject of thought, is always known to the thinker. Written speech, on the contrary, must explain the situation fully in order to be intelligible. The change from maximally compact inner speech to maximally detailed written speech requires what might be called deliberate semantics—deliberate structuring of the web of meaning. (Vygotsky, 1962, pp. 98-100)

Thus the kinds and causes of errors revealed in grammar research seem not to pertain to formal grammar. Whether these errors are due to deep psychological functions, the nature of cognitive development, or to what Noam Chomsky called "such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest,
and errors (random or characteristic) in applying knowledge of the language in actual performance" (1965, p. 3, emphasis added), there is nothing in the nature or probable causes of errors to justify the teaching of formal grammar as a remedy.

**Syntactic maturity utility: sentence structure-oriented studies.** While numerous studies have investigated the corrective utility of formal grammar instruction, relatively few studies in the entire canon of grammar research investigate the claim that formal grammar instruction will lead to the use of more mature syntax, defined by Hunt (1964) in terms of the greater length of the "minimally terminable unit" of the main clause and all subordinate elements. A number of journal articles between 1957 and 1964 advocated increasing students' mastery of sentence structure and flexibility by having them write according to the directions of "patterned" strings of grammatical terminology or model sentences. Mellon (1971, p. 9) cites five of these articles, some based on traditional, others on structural or transformational grammar. As Mellon notes, "These proposals represent a departure from the strictly corrective notions of the functional grammarian, in that they view grammar as enabling a kind of language practice which in turn will cause the student to employ more mature sentence structure" (p. 9).

Three recent studies show an interesting progression. What at first seemed to be proof that transformational
grammar study could improve student writing—the key claim of Bateman and Zidonis (1966)—was questioned by Mellon (1971) and finally disproven by O'Hare (1973). Mellon pointed out a crucial fault in the Bateman and Zidonis study, that all the extra gains shown in the experimental class were made by four students (1971, p. 11). Responding to the Bateman and Zidonis claim that their transformational-generative grammar study treatment provides the most fruitful basis for investigating and modifying the composition process, Mellon points out that "the process which grammars describe is speaker-hearer neutral. It differs from that which might be formulated in a description of production, particularly production of whole discourses, and it is totally unrelated to the completely open question of how prestructured intentions to say or produce certain statements arise in the brain" (Mellon, p. 13, emphasis added).

Although this criticism applies to Mellon's own study as well, the missing ingredients identified in the statement point toward a more accurate and effective conception of grammar.

While Mellon's criticisms, and the subsequent demonstration by O'Hare that sentence combining without using grammatical terms and rules would achieve superior gains, have shown the insufficiency of Bateman's and Zidonis's claims for the syntactical utility of transformational-generative grammar study—some researchers have credited the Bateman
and Zidonis study with having shown reduction in students' writing errors (Mellon, pp. 6-7; O'Hare, pp. 6-8). The study is summarized by Blount in the Second Handbook of Research on Teaching, and credited with having measured "error change" scores and having shown that "knowledge of transformational grammar enabled the student to reduce the occurrence of certain errors in his writing" (1973, p. 1085). However, the fact is that the Bateman and Zidonis study (1966) supports no such broad claim. This is worth emphasizing, for otherwise the study would seem to be the only piece of research that proved error reduction could result from the study of any type of formal grammar. But the "errors" noted in the analysis of data in Bateman and Zidonis (pp. 27-34) consist of five classes of errors in applying transformational rules; they do not include even a single kind of error noted in the studies summarized in the previous section. For any of the type of errors that either teachers, parents, or curriculum writers have shown concern about, Bateman and Zidonis do not show any reduction! Rather, their study is an interesting first step in showing how work with the sentence can influence the development of syntax.

Mellon's study (1971) replicated a number of features of the Bateman and Zidonis research. Both involved formal instruction in transformational terms and rules; both featured application practice of having students follow
rule-directions to combine or embed given kernel sentences. In some respects Mellon improved technical aspects that he had criticized in Bateman and Zidonis. But Mellon's principal contribution came in suggesting the cause for his students' increased growth rate in syntactic maturity:

Here some readers of this study may wish to conclude that it has confirmed a belief about schoolroom grammar long posited as a simple article of faith, namely that grammar study "improves" sentence structure. In fact, however, this experiment proves no such thing and should not be said to. Clearly it was the sentence-combining practice associated with the grammar study, not the grammar study itself, that influenced the syntactic fluency growth rate. Indeed, the two activities that in the past have been the very hallmarks of grammar and writing experiments—the conscious application of grammatical learnings during the act of writing, and the conscious imitation of existing sentences—were specifically enjoined from the rationale and procedure of the present study simply because they misrepresent the composing process and have always been instinctively rejected by students along with the grammar that was said to have facilitated them. (1971, pp. 73-74)

In some very significant ways, both Mellon's and O'Hare's systems for sentence combining "misrepresent the composing process;" moreover, the value of their increasing the growth rate for syntactic maturity is quite debatable.

O'Hare's (1973) results correlate with what Mellon had concluded—that it was the sentence-combining practice and not the grammar study which had accounted for the growth of students' syntax. O'Hare constructed an experiment using the very same kernel sentence exercises as Mellon had used,
but changed the signal system of the directions, so that instead of using transformational grammar terms it used ordinary language to indicate the linking word or operation to be used in combining the base sentences. He also totally dispensed with any study of formal grammar. His key findings were that the "seventh grade students who were exposed to grammar-free written and oral sentence-combining practice showed evidence of a level of syntactic maturity well beyond that typical of eighth graders and in many respects similar to that of twelfth graders. In words per T-unit, the most reliable measure of syntactic maturity, they experienced approximately twenty times normal growth" (1973, from the study's abstract on the inside front cover).

While it may seem that this growth in words per T-unit is very impressive, others have questioned whether it is really so good to have seventh graders write more like eighth graders, or even like twelfth graders--and, particularly, whether increased mean T-unit length means better

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Syntactic maturity is assumed by O'Hare, Hunt (1964), and others to be what characterizes the writing of adults and older students, compared to younger students. Maturity thus reflects development associated with chronological age. Sentence length had been the measure formerly used to gauge syntactic maturity; the "T-unit" measure that Hunt perfected separates subordination from coordination in sentences by defining the T-unit as the main clause and all subordinate elements. In comparison to a variety of other measures, increased mean T-unit length was found to be the most reliable indicator of the greater age or higher grade level of the writer.
writing. Increased T-unit length means that students are writing longer and more complex sentences. John Dixon comments on the reactions of the participants in the 1966 Dartmouth Seminar regarding this issue, even before Mellon and O'Hare had reported their studies:

For instance, the repertoire of structures used in speech show an increasing complexity as children grow older and develop more control of language. On the face of it, then, one might use growing complexity of repertoire as evidence to support a particular programme of instruction in language (given the appropriate controls). But this is to forget that complexity may be well or badly used to organize experience. Members of the Seminar were strongly critical of claims, based on such evidence, for sentence-stretching by adding modifiers or by sentence synthesis. (1967, p. 16)

The ability to handle complex syntax may be well or badly used, and the skillful use of syntactic flexibility depends on the context--the meaning, intent, audience--in short, all the aspects of rhetoric and logic which are discarded by "a-rhetorical" grammar.

Both Mellon's and O'Hare's sentence-combining systems are a-rhetorical, though each gives different reasons for this. Mellon says, "I would insist on construing these activities as a-rhetorical in nature right up through grade nine" (1971, p. 82). He gives as a reason for this that the consideration of rhetorical elements of style require the "cognitive maturity entailed in their being able to think consciously about the 'how' of expression while maintaining
at the same time an appropriate concern for the 'what.' Most junior high school children lack this maturity, and treating them as if they did not—as if they could and therefore should look upon and monitor their writing with the same 'third eye of objectivity' possessed by older students and adults—generally succeeds only in creating in these youngsters an intense dislike for writing and the writing classroom and in making them very uncooperative students during their high school years" (1971, p. 82, emphasis added). These assumptions are remarkably superficial. For one thing, Mellon seems to think that students' writing is or should be a "one-shot" task. Not even all adults consider the "how" and "what" of expressing their thoughts at the same time. Mellon seemingly assumes students would ignore any work with revision—the point at which a "third eye of objectivity" comes into play. Moreover, the student writing samples published in many sources, including Moffett (1968b), show that given interesting topics or instructed to assume a character role point of view, students can manipulate expression for varying effects quite well.

Mellon's reference to "cognitive maturity" factors in support of a-rhetorical sentence work is made without any substantiation from Bruner, Piaget, or other cognitive psychologists—who indicate that about the age of eleven or twelve, students enter the "formal operations stage" where
they can do the very things that Mellon asserts they can't. Further, even if he was right about "thinking consciously about the 'how' of expression," this avoids the issue of whether students can use the "how" of expression unconsciously. Common sense would indicate they can, for their entire language lives have been spent, for the most part, in concrete speaker-hearer-purpose situations of communication. Divorcing sentence and language work from such natural, whole contexts is part of what makes a subject abstract and difficult--yet this in effect is what Mellon has argued is necessary in order to make sentence-combining activities understandable and effective for seventh and eighth graders.

O'Hare (1973) used Mellon's a-rhetorical sentences for control purposes, so that his results could offer definite proof whether the sentence combining apart from any grammar study was responsible for the increased syntactic maturity achieved by the students in Mellon's study. At several points O'Hare indicates the probable undesirability of this separation of rhetoric from grammar. He disagrees with Mellon's basis for rejecting the use of exercises in which students make up their own sentences to match patterns, a practice Mellon had claimed would distract students from the structural pattern by forcing them to search for "pointless content." O'Hare believes "an imaginative teacher could so structure an assignment as to make the students' search for meaningful content interesting per se" (1973, p. 25). He
says further that the attractiveness of sentence-combining practice lies in its possible integration with composition instruction, touching on style, particularly for students exhibiting an immature or choppy sentence style (p. 33). "Rhetoric and sentence-combining practice," O'Hare writes, "should be viewed not as mutually exclusive or even discrete but rather as complementary" (p. 69).

A similar conclusion had been reached six years earlier when O'Donnell, Griffin, and Norris (1967) concluded their extensive study of the syntax of school children by recommending the development of instructional materials in which children could manipulate syntax, guided by this provision: "Naturally, the development of judgment about what is appropriate ought to accompany growth in ability to manipulate syntax. . . . Concern with structure must not be separated from concern with other aspects of language growth" (pp. 100-101).

The research on grammar thus provides a two-edged sword, cutting away claims for the effectiveness of formal grammar, yet also revealing approaches that have shown greater effects in reducing the incidence of inappropriate choices and increasing students' mastery of mature syntax, qualified by important advice to develop rhetorical judgment along with the capacity to write longer, more complex sentences. If teachers are to break the hold by which formal grammar dominates their thinking about basic skills in sentence competence,
they need to see the refutation of formal grammar proponents' claims; yet teachers also need clarification of means to achieve those goals for which formal grammar has been shown inadequate. For this reason it must be seen as a positive outcome that nearly a century of research has resulted in the following approaches being the recommended means to achieve the error reduction and syntactic maturity goals of grammar: 1) close examination of sentences on the basis of thought and meaning; 2) individualized diagnosis and correction of unacceptable forms of usage; 3) active manipulation of syntax by students; and 4) elimination of instruction in abstract theory and terms.

Despite these conclusions, the inertia of past practices may make even the best-grounded alternatives to formal grammar seem presumptive in the face of the solid and ancient tradition of formal grammar instruction. If grammar teaching is to be reformed, we must be prepared to answer those who see no reason to tamper with the time-tested approaches of traditional grammar. For this reason historical research on grammar teaching provides a valuable complement to the 20th century classroom research.

The Grammar Tradition

It is a mistake to assume that the history of grammar shows aims and methods corresponding to those assumed in formal grammar in our own time. While many English teachers
take a course in the history of the English language, and grammar textbooks now consistently give a chapter on the history of English as a language, neither the textbooks nor the colleges provide what would be far more enlightening to English teachers—a history of grammar teaching. Even the highlights of such a history, such as could be presented in one lecture, would indicate how far from the original purposes and contexts of grammar instruction we have come, and how varied and unstable the seemingly solid tradition behind grammar actually is. Such a history would suggest that if we go far enough back in going back to basics, grammar teaching would be far different from what schools are now adopting or reemphasizing.

Ian Michael's monumental study, English Grammatical Categories and the Tradition to 1800 (1970), in which he examined the 272 grammars known prior to 1800—140 of which had never been studied before—shows the persistence of efforts from the start to keep grammar from developing too narrow a perspective on language. Rather than gradual narrowing of grammar to matters of formal structure and correctness, the record shows that the broader conception of grammar was displaced by Lindley Murray's 1795 English Grammar and the succession of textbooks which were derived from it. Michael documents how misconceived teachers' notions of the actual tradition are. Several of his introductory remarks state conclusions that relate to the need to discard what teachers
have assumed is the tradition.

It is not generally realized, even in the schools, how difficult it is for anyone to control the expression and interpretation of language, and that control is as difficult to teach as to achieve. The traditional means of teaching control, to pupils at all levels, in their own language as well as in foreign languages, is a set of analytical procedures called grammar. The discipline called English grammar, as taught to schoolchildren, is widely, if vaguely, said to be ineffective—for various reasons. The best reason, and the only one relevant here, is that it is not the right kind of grammar.

It seems obvious that English grammar at the elementary level is just the application to English of Latin grammar. Yet this fact, which critics have long made their chief reason for the inappropriateness of our grammar, also supports one of the chief resistances to any real reform: "Who are you to change the system of centuries, compact, agreed, and established?" The acceptance of any effective reform is, in this situation, closely related to our understanding of the past. (Michael, 1970), pp. 1-2)

Michael goes on to state that the apparent continuity of the classical tradition is far more diverse than we are inclined to believe. "Behind a superficial appearance of uniformity, imitativeness and dullness the English grammars in fact contain a most surprising diversity of outlook and of categories" (p. 2). He further asserts that "the difficulties of present day teachers of English, both conservative and radical, are accentuated by misconceptions about the tradition: its unanimity and credentials" (p. 4). The extensive evidence Michael sets forth for these conclusions comprises most of his 622-page volume, and produces perhaps the most surprising evidence of subjectivity and variety in the tradition in the eighth chapter, where he documents 56 different systems of parts of speech accepted by grammarians.
at the beginning of the 18th century.

Beyond the diversity of the tradition which current notions of grammar fail to reflect, several other important conclusions seem warranted in setting the historical context of grammar teaching in perspective. Below are six key generalizations which may help English teachers have a more accurate view of the background of grammar teaching. These generalizations further point to the need to have English teachers reconceive the nature and role of grammar in their teaching.

In its origins the meaning of grammar was much broader than the current idea of traditional grammar indicates. Historians trace the roots of grammar to the Greeks, and credit Dionysius Thrax as having written the first grammar, about 166 B.C. Dionysius Thrax defined grammar as "acquaintance with the general usage of poets and prose-writers" (Michael, p. 24), and described grammar under six headings: 1) reading aloud correctly; 2) explanation of the figurative language used by poets; 3) explanation of difficult words, especially those used in historical writing; 4) tracing the original significance of words; 5) demonstration of grammatical analogies (classifying words which resemble each other in form); and 6) literary criticism. These six categories reflect the larger divisions which early grammars tended to share: reading, explanation, and criticism (Michael, pp. 25-26).
In the late fourth century Diomedes described grammar as "the applied science of reading and expounding the work of poets, historians, and other writers. It is also the rules of speaking and writing correctly. That is to say, grammar covers the whole field of literary and linguistic study" (Michael, p. 27). By the 18th century, English grammars continued this tradition. Reflecting the original field, they applied the term grammar to a wide range of studies; on the other hand, they restricted it to the classification and analysis of words. Michael notes that "one lesson of the tradition is that the study of language and the study of literature must illuminate each other. By keeping flexible the reference of the term grammar the 18th century grammarians achieved a theoretical unity which in practice they almost always ignored. Our practice is better than theirs, but it is hampered by an inappropriate and inadequate linguistic theory, the chief defect of which is too narrow a conception of grammar" (p. 199, emphasis added).

From the start of the tradition there was a tension between those who wished to "restrict grammar to a purely structural treatment of language and those who wished it to include considerations of meaning" (Michael, p. 25). As Michael comments in showing later evidence of the broader conception of grammar, "the study of verbal communication is the study of language in use and alive, and it is to this study that grammar has intermittently aspired: in the early
days of the Greek tradition and in the hands of the speculative grammarians. It is this study which is needed in our schools today" (p. 191). The implication of Michael's conclusions is not only that we need to broaden our current conception of grammar, but that we also need new means to carry out such a conception lest we, too, like so many in the tradition, achieve a vision of our purposes that is undermined by our practices.

In contrast to the view which many have, that instruction in formal grammar was a cornerstone of classical education, historical research reveals that native language study in classical Greek and Roman education utilized public speaking (oratory and rhetoric) and literature. Grammar, in any form similar to that taught in schools today, was not a part of Greek education and was used in Roman education only for the study of Greek. This conclusion is verified by encyclopedias and historical works such as those of Mead (1972, chap. 1 and 2), Hooper (1967, chap. 2 and 3), Flaceliere (1965, chap. 11 and 16), and Cowell (1961, pp. 34-61). Originally grammar was an advanced specialized study and also a methodology of foreign language instruction. Learning parts of speech and rules does not appear to have been part of a native language curriculum prior to the evolution of English as a subject, discussed below; rather, much of the basic education involved learning the classics by rote, particularly learning Homer. Memorization of literature at
least theoretically would have set the rhythms, syntax, and rhetoric of superior language use in the minds of students. This is not unlike the credit many writers of the past have given to the influence of reading and memorizing passages from the King James Bible. By contrast to this, the exercise sentences and passages in today’s grammar textbooks are paltry indeed!

Our current grammar textbooks seem to treat English as if it were a foreign language rather than one the student has known and spoken since infancy. The descriptions of forms and structures derive from the traditional role of grammar instruction, as an aid to learning a foreign language; its use in teaching a native language comprises a relatively recent development in the tradition. It is far too easy to misconceive the teaching and learning of French grammar and English grammar in school. The common term grammar conceals fundamental differences between studying the structure of a language which the student has known since infancy, and studying the forms and structure of an unknown language as part of the process of learning to use it. As Michael notes, "in using our own language we need to give conscious attention to its structure only when the smooth and unconsidered processes of expression and interpretation falter; when we are pulled up for a moment, uncertain about the meaning of a word we read; when we cast about for the right expression; when we halt in order to work out
how one part of a sentence is related to another. The schoolboy, however, starting a foreign language, has to learn the actual words; he has to learn how to express plurality; he has to learn the rules of word order. His situation is very different from that in which he is using his own language" (1970, p. 147).

When English emerged as a school subject in the nineteenth century, there had already been several grammars of Latin written in English, and those were adapted as content for the new subject of "English" without considering the differences between the two languages. These differences ought to seem more obvious today, given the advances in linguistics since the eighteenth century. Latin is an inflectional language in which the case endings of words determine their function in a sentence, while English is a positional language in which word order determines the functions of words. Yet it seems quite remarkable that teachers still spend so much time teaching parts of speech and simple sentence patterns when their students or their own children use sentences of such greater variety and syntactic complexity than the grammar books use. It is not that students don't make inappropriate choices in their speech and writing; the fact that they do is one reason to justify methods that have students give close attention to their own language, as part of a reconceived grammar. What
is remarkable is that so much of grammar instruction treats the language as if students had no prior knowledge or skill in it. In the process, many students become as self-conscious and reticent in an English class as they can be in foreign language classes. It seems self-evident that different means than those required for foreign language instruction are necessary in order to help students increase their control of expression and interpretation in their own language.

Perhaps it is less remarkable that instruction in formal grammar fails to improve students' language use when one realizes that English grammar originated as Latin grammar written in English. Before the eighteenth century, works with "English Grammar" titles were entirely concerned with Latin, often using the word "grammar" without qualification in titles of works which dealt only with Latin grammar. Grammar instruction plainly and openly was offered as an aid in the introduction of a foreign language, nearly always Latin. Little wonder then that the categories of traditional English grammar fit Latin better than English; in their origins they were intended for use in teaching Latin and the grammar systems themselves were even written in Latin, prior to the seventeenth century. Lindley Murray's 1795 English Grammar marked the turning point, when grammar was no longer overtly serving the purpose of acquiring Latin, but rather applying principles of Latin grammar to English instruction. However, Murray's grammar was grossly infected by the
misconceived efforts to reshape the "corrupted" English tongue so that it would conform to the "purer" Latin language.

The application of Latin grammar to English in the eighteenth century was part of a well-meaning but ill-informed reform movement of the time. By the sixteenth century, the vernaculars in England, France, Italy, Germany, and Spain had all ascended to replace Latin as the written language of literature and learning. The development of printing presses, the rise of the middle class, the growth of newspapers, and such social and technological changes had led by the seventeenth century to a demand for regularizing spelling, expanding vocabulary, and clarifying the meanings of both new and existing words. These resulted naturally in the development of dictionaries in all the European countries, at about the same time. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, English vocabulary had expanded enormously, mainly as a result of the cultural flowering of the Elizabethan era. "The demand for correct English was specifically stated early in the eighteenth century and it grew rapidly in volume and specific emphases. The prevailing view of language in the eighteenth century was that English could and must be subjected to a process of classical regularizing" (Leonard, 1962, p. 14). To achieve this end, English grammarians sought to refine the language through a marriage with logic and Latin grammar, but in the process, they completely disregarded English usage, including that of the best authors.
In the eighteenth century, English grammarians turned away from these legitimately basic concerns which continued to occupy the academies in France and Italy (cf. Baugh, 1957, pp. 316-317, and Rickard, 1974, pp. 106-110). Political and intellectual changes in England in the eighteenth century, discussed by Baugh (particularly pp. 306-317), followed a spirit of scientific rationalism and a preference for order and "correctness." Thus efforts to formulate rules of syntax and usage, which previously had been descriptive of the literary and educated London dialect, became prescriptive in this period. Rather than looking to the usage of the best writers, artificial criteria of correctness were deduced largely from Latin, following logical analogies even when linguistic similarities were nonexistent. English grammarians in the Augustan age sought to fix language permanently in the desired form, based on the model of classical Latin. Historical research on the evolution of Latin in its vernacular forms, available in the eighteenth century, shows the changes Latin underwent so long as it was used as a living language. Samuel Johnson, whose dictionary was based on definitions using multiple literary examples of word usages, concluded that was impossible, due to the character of language, which must change and evolve if it is a live language (cf. Baugh, 1957, pp. 324-325). Yet the English grammarians were uninfluenced by this view and, moving further and further away from concerns having to do
with vocabulary, spelling, and style—which continued to be the central concerns elsewhere in Europe, devoted their efforts to constructing rules for permanently setting English in a "correct" form.

Grammatical studies thus shifted from the classics to English, from a method designed to teach a foreign language to the task of correcting a native one. Eighteenth century reformers even published "corrected editions" of Shakespeare and Milton. In general, these reformers subscribed to the Neo-Platonic notion that language was divinely instituted, mirroring actuality but corrupted by man. English was assumed to be a debased and degenerate offspring of Latin and Greek, and the grammarians were therefore attempting to return language to its pristine glory.

Thus we find the laudable effort to improve and correct the grammar and syntax of English sadly handicapped by ignorance of linguistic principles on the one hand and misleading philosophies on the other. Yet the prescriptions of the reformers, whether good or bad, were received, approved, and formulated into rules; the rules were gathered into textbooks and were copied from book to book throughout the nineteenth century. (Pooley, 1974, p. 8)

We still have grammar textbooks with much of the misleading theory and practice of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, due to the fact that Lindley Murray copied almost all of his grammar text from Bishop Lowth's 1762 Short Introduction to English Grammar, and Murray's text subsequently enjoyed tremendous popularity and influence—all facts which both
Pooley and Leonard point out. Leonard quotes Noah Webster, who said in 1807 that Bishop Lowth "criticized away more phrases of good English than he has corrected of bad . . . (and) by arbitrary rules has substituted phrases that have been rarely, or never, used at all. But of the doubtful points in grammar, not half have been correctly settled by Lowth and his followers, and I have no hesitation in affirming that the grammars now taught in our schools introduce more errors than they correct" (Leonard, 1962, p. 236).

This is the "tradition" upon which traditional grammar is founded!

As if "correcting" acceptable usage weren't bad enough, grammar study was then brought into the English curriculum to provide a rigorous structure for the study of literature and to lend "subject matter" to the evolving field of English at a time when a pedagogical theory of "mental discipline" held sway. Prior to the end of the nineteenth century there was nothing even approximating the range of topics that we now include under the heading "the study of English."

Applebee notes that at the root of this long delay lay the pedagogical theory of mental discipline. "It held that the purpose of education was to exercise and train the mental faculties, in particular the faculties of 'memory' and 'reason.' The value of any given subject was directly proportional to the degree of internal structure which the subject exhibited, the apparatus of rules and 'knowledge'
which a student would be required to master" (Applebee, 1974, pp. 5-6). Thus English faced the problem that, at least as far as the classicists were concerned, the subject --particularly English literature--was too easy. "Only by being grafted onto other disciplines with more evident justifications did literature find a place at all in the early curriculum" (Applebee, p. 6). The particular discipline used to give literature "rigor" was grammar--the complex vocabulary and rules of syntax of the classical languages. With an ample source of texts from Murray and his successors, with an inherited methodology from grammatical studies in the classical languages, and with an acceptable support from the theory of mental discipline, English grammar came to be taught in most American schools by 1810.

An important result of the grafting of classical grammar onto literature was the separation of grammar from rhetoric and logic, a divorce occurring largely under the impetus of a group of eighteenth and nineteenth century Scottish educators who disagreed with the claim that grammar was a necessary structure for studying English literature, or important for learning the arts of public reading and speaking (Applebee, pp. 8-10). Without getting into the details of this movement to make rhetoric a separate college discipline, an implication relating to a central aspect of this dissertation should be mentioned. Grammar is concerned with the formal structure and correctness of sentences; rhetoric
places emphasis on expression—on diction, style, figurative language—and on the most persuasive and effective communication of ideas; logic relates statements that "follow" if the original statement is accepted. Rhetoric and logic depend upon a statement's having pointed content meaning which might affect others, and which might be argued over with some interest. Literary passages, Biblical verses, speeches, and epigrams and maxims were thus common sources of examples in early grammar books. But when grammar was divorced from the traditional trivium, its examples of language use tended to become trivial. Since form and structure became the only considerations in grammar study, meaning was given short shrift. In America, the Bible remained the source for many passages in grammar texts until about 1850; thereafter the sample or exercise sentences of grammar textbooks became shorter and shallower, statements having no context or origin in real speech situations, no intended listener, no actual speaker. "Trivium" derives from the Latin for "crossway," a place where roads meet. When the way of grammar is no longer intersected by the ways of rhetoric and logic, language study becomes trivial—to play sadly upon the word denoting the unity from which grammar was taken.

Far from supporting the kind of grammar that many English teachers value, our grammatical tradition shows that such teachers are preserving a facade from the decay which
should destroy it. When viewed in the light of history, the tradition crumbles from the weight of its contradictions and accidental mutations. Yet like grammar research, the tradition does give us insights into some characteristics to be reclaimed. An acceptance of better approaches to teaching students to control expression and interpretation at the level of sentence use in language will come more easily if English teachers recognize the origins and inadequacies of the tradition of grammar teaching. However, it may be that understanding the past leads to acceptance of reform only after teachers have a chance to see and try alternative approaches--and to determine whether or not they can meet the "political" reality of existing expectations that they will teach grammar.
CHAPTER III
IMPLICATIONS OF INSIGHTS FROM LANGUAGE THEORY FOR TEACHING GRAMMAR

The research reviewed in Chapter II has indicated that teaching formal grammar terminology and rules has not succeeded in achieving the goals of grammar instruction—reducing errors and mastering syntax. Further, the grammar research contrasts alternative approaches to formal grammar that were determined to be more effective in achieving grammar goals. Finally in Chapter II the research indicated a number of ways that the actual tradition behind formal grammar teaching differs significantly from what many English teachers may suppose. This chapter seeks to discover a sturdier basis than what formal grammar and the tradition behind it provide for answering an essential grammar curriculum question: "What is to be taught?" In determining what is to be taught in any subject, few teachers would choose to spend much time re-teaching skills students have already mastered. However, many English teachers hold the view that when they teach grammar to their students, they are teaching them something they don't already know, something pertaining to basic skills they haven't yet mastered. Many hope the study of grammar will enable students to have a fuller knowledge of sentence structure. Yet language
development studies show that the grammatical competence of school children indicates they do not lack such learning and ability as are entailed in the study of grammar. Moreover, the nature of language can help clarify the goals to which grammar might best be directed.

**Syntactic mastery in children.** In any review, from a brief summary to an exhaustive survey, of language development studies, one dominant conclusion emerges: the ages at which children can be studied—before their complete acquisition of the capacity to use the syntactic structures which formal grammar analyzes and classifies—range from two to six years. In his research on children's development of the ability to produce and understand complex sentences of various kinds, John Limber cites Leopold's conclusion to his study of his two year, eleven month old daughter: "... with the mastery of complex sentences, the linguistic development has reached the last stage. In the future only refinements can be expected. In general, it is astonishing how little her language differs from recognized usage" (Limber, in Moore, 1973, p. 170). Limber's research led him to confirm and extend Leopold's conclusion, and add: "What I have not been able to do, unfortunately, is to alleviate by explanation any of the astonishment Leopold--or anyone else--is compelled to express upon consideration of the linguistic achievements of the 2-year-old children" (Moore, p. 185). Limber's studies show that:
By 3 these children have unmistakably acquired the ability to generate syntactically complex names and descriptions—complements and relatives. Thus they are able to individuate linguistically a wide variety of abstract and concrete entities, e.g., desires, actions, and foods for which syntactically simple expressions may be inadequate. (Moore, p. 182)

Similarly, Ervin-Tripp and Slobin (1966) note in their review of literature on language acquisition that a "layering of constituents in adult phrase structure is found from the very beginning of grammar" (in Bruner, et al., 1966, p. 36). This indicates that not only do pre-school children join sentence elements (which linguists refer to as "transformational sentence combining"), but they also perform what is regarded as the linguistically more sophisticated task of embedding phrase structures, and they do so from the very outset of language acquisition. Assuming this, one must conclude that basic formal grammar is inadequately rudimentary in its description of the actual language which the student has already mastered, for the pre-school child's linguistic feats already far outstrip what the formal grammars in any school text describe.¹

¹Similar conclusions from numerous studies and reviews corroborate what has been said about the extent of mastery by children. Comprehensive reviews of the literature on language development in infants and children, with special attention to speech production by pre-school children, have been published by McCarthy (1954), by Carroll (1960), and by Ervin and Miller (1963). More recent studies of the language of school age children, not dealt with in those summaries, have been reported by Strickland (1962), Loban (1961, 1963, 1964), Menyuk (1961, 1963, 1964a, 1964b),
While some teachers concentrate on the grammar goal of being able to progress to and master more complex and flexible syntax, many more are simply concerned with teaching the basic parts of speech. Yet, "after the age of three, the parts of speech show little change. This is in agreement with other studies" (Templin, 1957, p. 134). Thus teachers wanting to affect children's use of language cannot expect any direct benefit from parts of speech instruction, since the proportion of nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc., used by a person does not vary significantly from age three through adulthood. In fact, the literature shows that simple and complex syntax, transformational embedding, and the use of parts of speech are all mastered prior to any age at which such mastery will become the target of deliberate instruction. Further development will occur only in the increasing length and transformational density (number of embedded sentence and phrase structures) of the various phrase and clause structures which have been acquired normally by the end of the first grade. However, the directions of development in the school years point toward some features that deserve more priority than they have received heretofore in grammar teaching.

**Syntactic development in school children.** The extent of children's use of a wide variety of syntactic patterns is

Hocker (1963), Hunt (1964, 1965), Stine and Stine (1965), and O'Donnell, Griffin, and Norris (1967).
a foremost finding apparent in the literature. Strickland (1962) reported on the number of language patterns observable in the first through sixth grade levels, finding 658 patterns in first grade and 1,041 patterns by grade six. Hocker (1963) used a simpler method of structural analysis and found first grade children using 331 different sentence patterns. Riling (1965) studied children's oral and written sentence patterns in fourth and sixth grade students, finding ranges for her groups from 585 to 845 different patterns in oral expression, and a range of 344 to 527 in written work. It is noteworthy that as children advanced through elementary school they tended to favor several (from three to seven) patterns with greater frequency. O'Donnell, Griffin, and Norris (1967) noted this, without offering explanation, in finding that "all clausal patterns identified were used by at least some kindergarten children" (p. 80), but only at the kindergarten level.

None of the studies comment on the causes which may interact to cause the decline in syntactic variety noted above. One can sense probable causes operating, however, including: the limited variety of syntax in basal readers, difficulty in mastering transcriptive skills for writing, the tendency of many elementary teachers to talk in unnecessarily simple sentences, and some tendencies for peer group language to exercise a greater effect. This last factor is based on the shift in the basic communication task
which children encounter in moving from home to school, worth noting because of the tremendous amount of language learning the child has accomplished before entering school. During pre-school years in the home the child interacts with an adult (typically), as noted by Brown and Bellugi (1964), in a process of questioning and answering in which the adult idealizes and expands the child's utterances, and--at least to the extent the child is "ready"--the child matches his next utterance selectively to the adult model.

As Bruner has rightly noted, too, "this exchange is as much a matter of learning to organize one's thoughts in a certain way as it is of learning the rules of grammar" (Bruner, et al., 1966, p. 38). Consciously, it is certainly more a matter of thought than grammar, a fact significant to reconceiving the nature of grammar teaching. As the child grows into puberty, the dialogue experienced with the peer group may exert a stronger influence. As Lewis points out in his excellent book on the natural uses of language in infancy and childhood, "the language of the group is relatively simple in structure, with meanings concrete rather than abstract. Its structure has the syntactic characteristics of an oral language--simple sentences unvaried in form" (1963, p. 227). In any case, the reduction in pattern flexibility confirmed in the studies still leaves students with an overwhelmingly wider variety of syntax than what is taught in school grammar, where five basic patterns may be
studied in contrast to the literally hundreds that are already in the child's usable repertoire!

In contrast to the findings on variety of syntactic patterns, which justify deemphasizing instruction in "basic patterns," are several studies noting the trend toward increased subordination, qualification, and embedding. O'Donnell, Griffin, and Norris (1967) found that all their elementary grade groups showed increasing use of subordinate clauses as they advance in chronological age; this increase was the greatest and most consistent in high ability groups. The amount and complexity of subordination tends to reflect both chronological and mental maturity, and socioeconomic status as well, according to Basil Bernstein (1958, 1960) and to Loban's 1963 study. Hunt (1964) established a progressive decrease of coordinated predication, along with an increase in subordinated predication--facts consistent with Piaget's statements discussed later in the chapter regarding the relationship between language and intellectual operations. Twelfth graders in Hunt's study used roughly two-thirds as many coordinated predicate structures as did eighth graders.

Hunt's older students tended to write sentence structures that put into reduced phrases and words what younger students would write as sentences, yet--as earlier studies had shown--nearly all the syntactic structures were used by the youngest writers (Hunt, p. 141); this means that in the case of complex subordinate structures these young writers
were using their intrinsic competence, which Limber (1973) noted develops in the second half of the child's third year.

Most of the developments in syntax noted by researchers take place prior to schooling. In school, formal grammar instruction tries to teach explicit, conscious awareness of linguistic competence through the learning of abstract terminology and rules. Language development studies show that the intrinsic competence which this grammar instruction describes has developed and is available for performance long before grammar teaching takes place. It is therefore unwarranted to presume that such instruction can be pointed toward the goal of developing abilities which have already been acquired. Moreover, for reasons best made clear by developmental psychologists, explicit verbal knowledge about this competence is dependent on abstract intellectual operations which do not sufficiently develop until adolescence. Therefore, grammatical knowledge "for-its-own-sake" cannot be a justifiable curricular goal much before the ninth grade—and after that only on highly debatable grounds.

Thus far we have discovered no grounds to justify grammar study for educational (as opposed to political) reasons. Neither the child's linguistic abilities and needs, nor the tradition discussed in Chapter II, provide valid justification for formal grammar instruction. The task of finding more justifiable and achievable goals for grammar
now takes us deeper into the nature of the relationship between language and thought. The work of Noam Chomsky stands as something of a bridge between language study and a reassessment of the basic nature of grammar teaching.

Contributions and criticisms of Chomsky, related to grammar teaching. Noam Chomsky is one of the few writers about grammar whose statements stand up well in the face of language acquisition data. His insights into the basic nature of the methods inherent in formal grammatical analysis lead him to the conclusion that grammatical theory is neither intended nor suitable for teaching students to increase their mastery of language skill. It is noteworthy that this commonly acknowledged leading thinker about grammar gives causes to reject the use of formal grammar for pedagogical purposes. One of Chomsky's key points is given in response to the position of the behaviorist— that language is acquired through imitation and conditioning.

Chomsky notes the astronomical number of sentences in our language that we immediately understand with no feeling of difficulty or strangeness, and states that "the number of patterns underlying our normal use of language and corresponding to meaningful and easily comprehensible sentences in our language is orders of magnitude greater than the number of seconds in a lifetime" (1968, p. 10).

Chomsky's view that the role of linguistic study is not to teach students how to use language, but to account for
how they can already use it, an important perspective for teachers to understand, is further evident in his noting that "the person who has acquired knowledge of a language has internalized a system of rules that relate sound and meaning in a particular way. The linguist constructing a grammar of a language is in effect proposing a hypothesis concerning this internalized system" (1968, p. 23). Chomsky clearly sees that grammar is not something to be taught as if the student doesn't already have it; it is, rather, the linguist's theoretical and abstract description for the student's internalized system.

Clearly, a child who has learned a language has developed an internal representation of a system of rules that determine how sentences are to be formed, used, and understood. Using the term "grammar" with a systematic ambiguity (to refer, first, to the native speaker's internally represented theory of his language and, second, to the linguist's account of this), we can say that the child has developed and internally represented a generative grammar, in the sense described. (1965, p. 25)

The purpose Chomsky sees for grammatical analysis is to make it "possible to give a relatively sharp and clear formulation of some of the central questions of psychology and to bring a mass of evidence to bear on them. . . . We try to develop the study of linguistic structure as a chapter of human psychology" (1968, p. 59). Earlier Chomsky had warned: "To avoid what has been a continuing misunderstanding, it is perhaps worthwhile to reiterate that a generative grammar is not a model for a speaker or hearer" (1965, p. 9).
If Chomsky's generative grammar is not such a model, then surely such an inadequate taxonomical system as traditional grammar cannot provide one.

Indeed, Chomsky brings formal grammar to the deep roots of near mystery, at least in the face of the empirical tradition, by stating that some innate capacity must be assumed in order to account for the normal linguistic competence of the child.

We must attribute to the speaker-hearer an intricate system of rules that involve mental operations of a very abstract nature, applying to representations that are quite remote from the physical signal. We observe, furthermore, that knowledge is acquired on the basis of degenerate and restricted data and that it is to a large extent independent of intelligence and of wide variations in individual experience. (1968, pp. 52-53)

Not only is there much in grammatical competence that is innate, according to Chomsky, but as he forthrightly points out, grammatical theory is unfolding, tentative, complex, and abstract (cf. 1965, p. 19; 1965, p. 148; 1968, pp. 24, 51, and 84).

One criticism of the directions that Chomsky has taken is noted by a number of critics, and this is that he fails to include the semantic aspect in later formulations of his theory. In his review of Chomsky's Reflections on Language (1975), Leonard F. Scinto (1976) says: 'The highly formalized nature of the theory and its exclusion of a whole range of questions of meaning, performance, and style severely limit the model's usefulness for anyone without a logician's
interest in syntactical description" (p. 647). This weakness is apparent in Chomsky's notion of "deep structure," which is deep only in a limited and reductionist sense. Along with traditional and structural grammar, transformational theory abstracts structure from meaning and logic, and so in a meaning sense becomes quite shallow. It is interesting to note that Chomsky had the contrast of meaning and pointless thought in sentence analysis right before him in *Language and Mind* (1968). In pointing out the precursor of his deep structure concept in the Cartesian Port-Royal *Grammar* of 1660, Chomsky shows how in the sentence, "Invisible God created the visible world," the structure consisted of three propositions: "that God is invisible," "that he created the world," and "that the world is visible" (cf. 1968, pp. 14-15). Chomsky seems not to recognize that the technique of breaking down such a sentence has a logical, truth-seeking character—and that the questions of the effectiveness of expression (rhetoric) are applicable as well. The Port-Royal Grammar belongs to a time before the divorce of grammar from rhetoric and logic. The following section will endeavor to show that the lack of rhetorical and logical considerations in Chomsky's and other existing formal grammars is the central flaw that makes them inconsistent with the nature of the relationship between language and thought.
The Relationship Between Language and Thought

Vygotsky, Piaget, and Bruner are giants, if that term is applicable, in their fields, and show remarkable consistency with each other in their major conclusions. Since it is in these psychologists' writing that teachers may begin to see the directions out of the dilemmas described up to now, a searching review of Vygotsky's, Piaget's, and Bruner's conclusions relating to language and thought can provide central roots for a new synthesis that can replace the ineffective approaches of formal grammar. L. S. Vygotsky's *Thought and Language* (1962) first appeared in its Russian edition in 1934, a few months after the author's untimely early death. Vygotsky states in his introductory chapter that the relationship between language and thought is an intrinsic one that has been distorted and obscured by our faulty methods of analysis. He contrasts the method of analyzing complex psychological wholes into elements, which then lack essential properties of the whole, with the alternative method of analysis into units which, unlike elements, retain all the basic characteristics of the wholes and which cannot be further divided without distorting or losing some of these characteristics. Vygotsky blames analysis into elements for all past failures in investigating thought and language (p. 3). He uses the analogy of the analysis of water into its component elements, hydrogen and oxygen;
hydrogen burns, oxygen sustains fire—yet water extinguishes fire, thus illustrating how the elements possess different properties from the whole. We arrive at the same impasse, Vygotsky says, when we study words and thought in isolation from each other. "The method of analysis based on this conception was bound to fail. It sought to explain the properties of verbal thought by breaking it up into its component elements, thought and word, neither of which, taken separately, possesses the properties of the whole" (p. 120).

This same warning that analysis into elements distorts what is being analyzed is evident in Piaget's statement that perceptions and thoughts cannot be understood without reference to the wholes in which they are organized, "since reduction to atomistic elements always impairs the unity of reality" (Piaget, 1950, p. 61). It may well be that much of the failure to get students to understand formal grammar is due to the fact that the sentences and words are separated from the various other elements that make up the context of actual use of language. This would seem to be the case, based on the conclusion reached by the Russian group of psychologists who were working with Vygotsky:

Verbal thought appeared as a complex, dynamic entity, and the relation of thought and word within it as a movement through a series of planes. Our analysis followed the process from the outermost to the innermost plane. In reality, the development of verbal thought takes the opposite course: from the motive which engenders a thought to the shaping of the thought, first in inner speech, then in meanings...
of words, and finally in words.
(Vygotsky, 1962, p. 152, emphasis added)

Thought and Language describes the Russian group's investigation of these different phases and planes which a thought traverses before it is embodied in words.

The main implication of these Russian studies for grammar teaching is that we must seek to use methods which render accurate understanding of unitary relations among motivation, inner speech, word meanings, and the expression of thought in a sentence. This complex, dynamic model stands in sharp contrast to the common notion that thought is merely subvocal speech—as the behaviorists assume. Rather, the process of putting thought into words is sufficiently complex to justify giving microscopic attention to word and sentence meaning—attention that grammar, by the nature of its limitation to dealing with single sentences, might stimulate, if thought and meaning can become considerations that are not outweighed by the analysis of form and structure. The importance of finding ways to stress the connection between thought and language seems inescapable, if one accepts Vygotsky's statement that "thought is not merely expressed in words; it comes into existence through them" (p. 125, emphasis added).

Piaget also stresses the primary importance of thought in relation to language. In a 1964 address at Cornell, Piaget remarked: "Words are probably not a short-cut to a
better understanding. . . . The level of understanding seems to modify the language that is used, rather than vice versa" (quoted in Murray, 1972, p. 9). Thought and understanding thus determine the natural use of words and sentences, and the purpose of such words and sentences is to bring forth thought--not merely as an act of translating, but as an act of transforming.

In the mind the whole thought is present at once, but in speech it has to be developed successively. A thought may be compared to a cloud shedding a shower of words. Precisely because thought does not have its automatic counterpart in words, the transition from thought to word leads through meaning. In our speech, there is always the hidden thought, the subtext. . . . Direct communication between minds is impossible, not only physically but psychologically. Thought must pass first through meanings and then through words. (Vygotsky, p. 150)

Certainly the process of putting thoughts into words is much more complex than we might presume from the various grammarians who ignore these aspects. As was mentioned in Chapter II, this same defect mars the sentence-combining approaches in Mellon's (1971) and O'Hare's (1973) studies which showed the first positive effects on student writing of any grammar treatment in the long history of grammar research.

**Inner speech.** A major contribution of Thought and Language is the basis it gives for understanding inner speech, which Vygotsky describes as a primary level of thought and language. This understanding can open the way
to reconceiving grammar and founding it on structures of language-in-thinking, rather than on superficial characteristics of language alone. Some cognitive psychologists dismiss the topic of inner speech, saying that because it is "inner" it is not open to investigation. For instance, Bruner says that the notion of inner speech presents "a view whose chief flaw is that one can say too little about the nature of inner speech" (Bruner, et al., 1966, p. 37). Yet this criticism does little justice to the innovative method of studying inner speech, which Vygotsky calls genetic. "The area of inner speech is one of the most difficult to investigate. It remained almost inaccessible to experiments until ways were found to apply the genetic method of experimentation. Piaget was the first to pay attention to the child's egocentric speech and to see its theoretical significance, but he remained blind to the most important trait of egocentric speech--its genetic connection with inner speech" (Vygotsky, pp. 131-132). By investigating the changing phenomena of egocentric speech, the Russian psychologists found the route to understanding inner speech. Since Vygotsky wrote Thought and Language in the early 1930's, he could not have been familiar with Piaget's later writings, which show his conversion to Vygotsky's conclusions. The main feature of egocentric speech which gives a clue to the nature of inner speech is its progressive compression, which appears fragmentary and disconnected. The Russians concluded:
... that as egocentric speech develops it shows a tendency toward an altogether specific form of abbreviation: namely, omitting the subject of a sentence and all words connected with it, while preserving the predicate. This tendency toward predication appears in all our experiments with such regularity that we must assume it to be the basic syntactic form of inner speech. (Vygotsky, p. 139)

Vygotsky's notion of inner speech as a distinct and primary plane of thought presents a contrast to the theory of deep structure (in transformational grammar) or basic sentences (in traditional and structural grammars). Both deep structure and basic sentences presume short, syntactically complete sentences; however, these notions do not correspond to the psychological foundations of thought and sentences, if one subscribes to Vygotsky's views. Circumstantial support for the presumption that "deep structure" and "basic sentence patterns" do not reflect basic levels of language-in-thought comes from the failure of research to show any improvement in students' speech or writing resulting from studying grammar—whether traditional, transformational, or structural.

Corroborative support for the idea that the dominance of predication is a feature of the basic plane of thought comes from four further areas. First, Limber's investigation of the "Genesis of Complex Sentences" notes that predicate expansion typically occurs through embedding the predicate of a second sentence in the object noun-phrase (or utterance-final NP) of a main sentence. These predicate
complements appear prior to the second year, but no subject complements appear prior to three years (reported by Limber in Moore, 1973, pp. 174-175). In the development of relative clauses, Limber also notes that "there are no subject relatives or any relative clauses attached to subject NPs" (p. 181). Thus developmental sequence suggests the primacy of predication that Vygotsky noted as the principal feature of inner speech.

Secondly, the sentence fragment error in writing is due primarily to the use of a subordinate clause as a sentence, as noted in several studies reviewed in Chapter II. Students writing fragments are, by and large, adding something to their previous sentence; they may actually be transcribing a thought-sentence without transforming it into surface syntactic structure. Further, a quick look through the advertisements of practically any magazine will reveal the use of predicate fragments in advertising copy. It may be that the millions of dollars that advertising agencies spend on psychological and motivational research has detected that shorter, predicative utterances offer a more direct route to the inner thinking level of human consciousness than the grammatically "correct" attachment of a subordinate structure to the main clause.

Thirdly, credence to Vygotsky's characterization of the predicative nature of inner speech comes through what a number of linguists have noted about poetry and other
"highly crafted" writing: that such writing tends to have a high "verbal density," consisting of embedded layers of predicate transformations and descriptive verbals. Perhaps in an intuitive way, the poet seeks a more direct means than ordinary language provides to communicate mind-to-mind. And perhaps, too, having students manipulate syntax to expand and re-contract the compressed language of poetry can help them overcome some of the barriers to poetic language and even seek to open their "inner speech minds" to the direct effect of language that shows inner speech-like characteristics.

Finally, a common sense observation lends support to accepting what Vygotsky has said about inner speech as a more accurate hypothesis about "deep structure" than grammarians have offered. This is the insight that in thinking, one nearly always knows or assumes the "who" or "what" that one is thinking about; thinking consists of working out what one observes, thinks, feels about that person, place, event, object, or idea. Notice that the basic question words tend in a majority of cases to elicit information that is predicative. Thus, "who?" and "what?" may elicit a subject element; yet both these words (used in an alternative context) and "where?" "when?" "how?" "why?" and "what was it like?" will bring forth predicative types of response. All these observations taken together build a strong support for the contention that Vygotsky's notion of inner speech is a
truer characterization of the basic structure of language-thinking than grammarians have heretofore offered.

Three other principal characteristics of inner speech, in addition to its predicate-dominated syntax, offer bases on which to reconceive grammar on the structures of language-in-thinking rather than on superficial features of language. The first of these is what Vygotsky called "the preponderance of the sense of a word over its meaning" (p. 146). The sense of a word is the sum of all the psychological events aroused in our consciousness by the word. It is a dynamic fluid, complex whole, which has several zones of unequal stability. Meaning is only one of the zones of sense, the most stable and most precise zone. A word acquires its sense from the context in which it appears; in different contexts, it changes its sense. Meaning remains stable throughout the changes of sense. The dictionary meaning of a word is no more than a stone in the edifice of sense, no more than a potentiality that finds diversified realization in speech" (p. 146). Vygotsky goes on to connect this broad, flexible notion of sense to the sentence, as well as to the word:

Just as the sense of a word is connected to the whole word, and not with its single sounds, the sense of a sentence is connected with the whole sentence, and not with its individual words. Therefore, a word may sometimes be replaced by another without any change in sense. Words and sense are relatively independent of each other. In inner speech, the predominance of sense over
meaning, of sentence over word, and of context over sentence is the rule. (pp. 146-147, emphasis added)

The implications from assuming that inner speech is the deepest level where thought and language unite may not be clear. At least, Vygotsky himself did not connect the primacy of context, sentence, and sense to any reform needed in grammar teaching. On pages 100-101 of Thought and Language he states a claim for the importance of grammar that seems quite inconsistent with the rest of his findings and with the basic assumptions he had earlier expressed concerning the superiority of analysis by units over analysis into elements. But the nature of the relationship between language and thought requires that work with the sentence— the characteristic domain of grammar—have contexts of meaning and motivation which are lacking in existing grammars, as Chapter IV documents.

Semantics and Grammar

The literature of language acquisition and development, as well as the cognitive theories of Vygotsky, Piaget, and Bruner, lend support to the particular claim that semantics has a more central role than syntax for language growth. "Semantic development stands in sharp contrast to syntactic development," notes McNeill (1970, p. 120), indicating that while syntax is mastered by age four or five, semantic growth continues for many years, often into adulthood. The
child's concept of a word's meaning changes, and, as well, the development of multiple meanings for a word is a continuing process; this conclusion is confirmed in studies by Leopold (1947), Velten (1943), and Werner and Kaplan (1950). Limber concluded that "as relatively fewer syntactic formats carry a much larger variety of syntactic-semantic relationships, the surface form of an utterance becomes progressively less valuable as an indicant of the syntactic-semantic relationship" (in Moore, 1973, p. 179). The implication which Limber gave to this finding was that more attention must be given to the idiosyncratic properties of vocabulary items involved in order to interpret structures appropriately. This contrasting importance of the syntactic and semantic aspects of language is noted by Bruner also:

What is striking about language as one of the specialized expressions of symbolic activity is that in one of its aspects, the syntactic sphere, it reaches maturity very swiftly. The syntactic maturity of a five-year-old seems unconnected with his ability in other spheres. He can muster words and sentences with a swift and sure grasp of highly abstract rules, but he cannot, in a corresponding fashion, organize the things words and sentences "stand for." The asymmetry is reflected in the child's semantic activities, where his knowledge of the senses of words and the empirical implications of sentences remain childish for many years, even after syntax has become fully developed. (Bruner, et al., 1966, p. 47)

As presently conceived and taught, then, grammar is unable to achieve its implicit aim to develop understanding of the patterns which underlie language, precisely because
its method of analyzing sentences has nothing to do with the "sense of words" or with the "empirical implications of sentences." If, as Vygotsky says, a child's capacity to communicate "is directly related to the differentiation of word meanings in speech and consciousness" (p. 129), then we probably retard the child's ability to communicate by ignoring the meaning dimension of sentences studied and produced. Lewis reached much this same conclusion in his chapter on "Language and Concrete Thinking":

The manipulation of words and figures as things in themselves may impose a severe check upon progress towards the goal of all reasoning—the power to solve problems. . . . This ability may be hindered if a child is encouraged in a preoccupation with words and numbers as objects in themselves instead of the concepts that these symbolize. To substitute for concrete thinking the manipulation of linguistic terms may well prevent, or at best seriously hinder, the development of insight into abstract relationships of wider generality. (1963, pp. 180-181, emphasis added)

Piaget takes us a step further in seeing some operational implications of the notion that meaning may be a deeper structural feature of language than syntax. He stresses the mobility of thought as a distinctive feature of thinking, as distinguished from perception.

Thought processes require structures which permit of more mobility without threatening disequilibrium. They must be free to flit rapidly from one idea to another and to arrange in new combinations. . . . A thought can be entertained and then unthought, and everything is as if it never occurred. . . . The focus of attention can be systematically
varied, so that information from a succession of fixations is compared and collated to yield something approaching an objective impression. (Piaget, quoted in Murray, 1972, p. 42)

As applied to sentence-thought statements, the general strategy which emerges gives a picture of manipulating ideas and words—which in turn necessitates the manipulation of syntax. The manipulation of semantic-syntactic structures as part of a flexible thinking process can provide a context for working with sentence production and study, based on the organic relationship between thought and language. A primary focus on meaning will exercise flexibility, unlike the fixed pattern of a given structure when syntax is the focus. The systematic mobility characterizing thought necessitates a corresponding manipulation of words and phrases in sentences to state a succession of viewpoints and expressions; this would culminate in selection of the most effective expression of the most logical viewpoint. What tends to characterize the good writer is the variety of ways he has to take hold of an idea and express it in one syntactic pattern or another. Giving meaning and thought their proper place in sentence work means that in grammar study this variety may be introduced and explored by students, rather than be constricted by unalterable syntax and pointless content.

An important part of the trouble in isolating and emphasizing syntactic structure is that linguistic progress
hides the comparatively slower progress in thinking. Findings noted by Piaget, Bruner, and Vygotsky all confirm this. H. Sinclair (1967), a colleague of Piaget, found that linguistically higher-order structural devices were used by children once they reach certain higher stages of operational thinking; but his research concluded that "language can prepare an operation but is neither sufficient nor necessary to the formation of concrete operations" (p. 67).

Bruner also noted that studies repeatedly show that children from age four and up learn to enmesh words "in a highly abstract and hierarchal system of categories used formally to signal causation, predication, and modification" (1966, p. 45), yet they do not "use the superordinate rule of categorization consistently nor organize what they know in a hierarchal organization" (pp. 45-46). The architecture of complexity is mastered in words before it is mastered in things.

Vygotsky discusses this phenomenon of mature syntax but immature thought, calling it "naive psychology."

It is manifested by the correct use of grammatical forms and structures before the child has understood the logical operations for which they stand. The child may operate with subordinate clauses, with words like because, if, when, and but, long before he really grasps causal, conditional, or temporal relations. He masters syntax of speech before syntax of thought. Piaget's studies proved that grammar develops before logic and that the child learns relatively late the mental
operations corresponding to the verbal forms he has been using for a long time. (Vygotsky, 1962, pp. 46-47)

Vygotsky goes on to say that basic laws governing psychological development resolve the apparent paradox of a child's being able to use syntax in ways not corresponding to his mental operations. "Consciousness and control appear only at a late stage in the development of a function, after it has been used and practiced unconsciously and spontaneously. In order to subject a function to intellectual and volitional control, we must first possess it" (1962, p. 90). It is for this reason that at the ages when grammar is usually taught—between fifth and ninth grades—a more important focus related to psycholinguistic development would be to take the complex syntactic competence which students have had since the age of three, and work with sentences whose ideas show the causal, conditional, and other subordinate types of thinking which develop as understandable thought operations in adolescence (cf. Piaget, 1950, pp. 145-146).

One final aspect of semantics and syntax as they relate to the relationship between thought and language concerns the sequence used in introducing grammar. The approach of most grammar texts is to begin with single words (parts of speech), proceed to phrases, then short sentences, and finally longer sentences. This may seem to be a logical sequence, based on the development of observable speech; but this is another instance where the separation of thought and
language and the analysis of external surface language structures into elements mislead us. Vygotsky, writing in 1934, was again the first to point out this disparity:

In regard to meaning, on the other hand, the first word of the child is a whole sentence. Semantically, the child starts from the whole, from a meaningful complex, and only later begins to master the separate semantic units, the meanings of words, and to divide his formerly undifferentiated thought into those units. The external and semantic aspects of speech develop in opposite directions— one from the particular to the whole, from word to sentence, and the other from the whole to the particular, from sentence to word. (1962, p. 126)

The language acquisition studies of Katz and Fodor (1963) and McNeill (1966) both confirm this priority of sentence meaning in the development of language from the first word (cf. McNeill, 1970, p. 115). This matches the characteristic of thought postulated by Vygotsky for inner speech, wherein an overall meaning-sense of the whole sentence—thought precedes its being broken down into word meanings and then brought forth as a spoken or written sentence (1962, p. 152).

The role of vocabulary and concepts. If meaning, sense, and flexible manipulation of thoughts become a primary focus for reconceiving the foundation of grammar teaching, then it is easy to see that this kind of work with words and sentences will introduce a focus on vocabulary. Vygotsky writes of several features of concepts and concept development that suggest a different approach to vocabulary teaching than the traditional approach of lists, definitions, and
tests. Referring to a German psychologist's 1921 studies, Vygotsky writes: "Ash's experiments showed that concept formation is a creative, not a mechanical, passive process; that a concept emerges and takes shape in the course of a complex operation aimed at the solution of some problem; and that the mere presence of external conditions favoring a mechanical linking of word and object does not suffice to produce a concept" (p. 54). An illustration of this description of concept formation by way of problem solving is that many children who do learn to master grammatical concepts do so through taking a foreign language taught in the grammar-translation method—the learning of which becomes the problem component, with the added feature that instruction typically occurs about the ninth grade, after intellectual maturation progresses to what Piaget terms the formal operations stage. This observation about concept mastery's being a by-product of problem solving applies to concepts generally, not simply to the special case of learning the abstract taxonomy of formal grammar. "Memorizing words and connecting them with objects does not in itself lead to concept formation; for the process to begin, a problem must arise that cannot be solved otherwise than through the formation of new concepts" (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 55). Problems in expressing meaning, derived from real language and communication motives, can provide an effective context for concept and vocabulary development. The sentence
composition and study approaches described in Chapter V suggest types of problems that students might be given, which can bring about concept formation in these problem solving contexts.

An even more revolutionary implication from Vygotsky is that the concepts we should be asking students to develop in their sentence work need to include many of the concepts that it would be natural to assume students have already learned. Vygotsky gives the basis for this conclusion by writing that:

The principal findings of our study may be summarized as follows: The development of the processes which eventually result in concept formation begins in early childhood, but the intellectual functions that in a specific combination form the psychological basis of the process of concept formation ripen, take shape, and develop only at puberty. Before that age, we find certain intellectual formations that perform functions similar to those of the genuine concepts to come. With regard to their composition, structure, and operation, these functional equivalents of concepts stand in the same relationship to true concepts as the embryo to the fully formed organism. To equate the two is to ignore the lengthy developmental process between the earliest and the final stage. (p. 58)

A page later Vygotsky states: "Learning to direct one's own mental processes with the aid of words or signs is an integral part of the process of concept formation. The ability to regulate one's actions by using auxiliary means reaches full development only in adolescence" (p. 59). Vygotsky calls the concepts that result from deliberate school
instruction "scientific concepts," and contrasts these to "spontaneous concepts"--the everyday terms such as "brother" that the child has been using longer than he can recall. "The child becomes conscious of his spontaneous concepts relatively late; the ability to define them in words, to operate with them at will, appears long after he has acquired the concepts" (Vygotsky, p. 108). Thus teachers can profitably spend more time helping students to sort out, define, and use in a variety of contexts the vocabulary they already have, while trying to express insights and feelings that are true for themselves.

What Vygotsky means by scientific concepts does not deal with the level of abstraction of a concept, but rather with its relative degree of frequency in the child's vocabulary. The particular examples Vygotsky gives reflect his Marxist orientation: exploitation, slavery, and civil war (p. 108). Yet even these examples suggest specific, concrete events that may be described to provide limited referents for such scientific concepts. It would not be analogous, however, to suppose that formal grammatical terminology could be taught as "scientific concepts," with the same degree of specific and concrete referents. Most grammatical concepts include an enormous number of words and phrases, some being spontaneous concepts, some scientific. The language of formal grammar thus confronts students with a degree of abstraction which includes and goes beyond scientific concepts, but which
doesn't give attention to the aspects of meaning or examples which allow students to acquire scientific concepts.

Vygotsky noted another feature of concepts that has strong implications for how vocabulary might be dealt with in a new kind of grammar study and production of thought-sentences. His insights into concept formation suggest a method of contrasting key words or phrases, first with what would be opposite or different concepts, then with words of similar meaning. "Our own experimental studies suggest that the child becomes aware of differences earlier than of likenesses, not because differences lead to malfunctioning, but because awareness of similarity requires a more advanced structure of generalization and conceptualization than awareness of dissimilarity" (p. 88). Vygotsky called this a "law of awareness;" it makes sense as the basis of a teaching and discussion strategy that moves from less to more abstract and generalized thought processes, particularly in beginning discussions with lower ability students. Focusing on key words and, perhaps with the aid of a good thesaurus, giving students several synonyms and antonyms would be a vocabulary learning method consistent with the primacy of dissimilarity in conceptualization.

All of these implications do not, however, suggest an exclusive focus on "spontaneous concepts" already in the student's vocabulary. But they do suggest using general linguistic contexts for introducing new words and concepts.
Vygotsky notes this in a passage in which he goes on to quote from the 1903 *Pedagogical Essays* of Leo Tolstoy. "Tolstoy, with his profound understanding of the nature of word and meaning, realized more clearly than most other educators the impossibility of simply relaying a concept from teacher to pupil:

> When he has heard or read an unknown word in an otherwise comprehensible sentence, and another time in another sentence, he begins to have a hazy idea of the new concept; sooner or later he will . . . feel the need to use that word--and once he has used it, the word and the concept are his. . . . But to give the pupil new concepts deliberately . . . is, I am convinced, as impossible and futile as teaching a child to walk by the laws of equilibrium." (pp. 83-84)

Teaching new words as they come up in actual language contexts, discussing first contrasting and then similar concepts, is the general teaching strategy appropriate to the foregoing observations.

Along with the notion of making more use of the students' existing vocabulary, Vygotsky also offers a justification for the teacher's having an active role in vocabulary teaching. He refers to the "zone of proximal development" in discussing the desirability of the teacher's posing problems and using examples which the student needs some help in handling (cf. p. 104). Expanding on this to show the concomitant need for interaction among students, Lewis writes:
In general, experimental evidence bears out a common observation that neither extreme is as effective as a due mixture of initiative by the child with some verbal help from others. . . . This is contrary to the normal experience of adults, who as a rule benefit most from discovering and formulating principles for themselves, but this is not really inconsistent with what is more beneficial for children. Adults have become accustomed to using language in their thinking; children are still engaged in learning to use language in this way and need our help in doing so. (1963, pp. 194-195)

Lewis was referring in this context to studies involving twelve-year-olds, and the observation's application to older students may vary according to their mental and linguistic maturity.

Motivation As the Foundation of Language and Thought

Vygotsky described the last step in his analysis of verbal thought as the first step in the synthesis of verbal thought: "Thought itself is engendered by motivation, i.e., by our desires and needs, our interests and emotions. . . . To understand another's speech, it is not sufficient to understand his words—we must understand his thought. But even that is not enough—we must also know its motivation" (pp. 150-151). In other words, motivation is the first step in the synthesis of verbal thought, and also it is a necessary level for understanding another's statement.

Although he is more widely known for his investigations of cognitive factors, Piaget also stresses the inseparability
of motivational aspects and knowing: "Knowing activity is only a partial aspect of the whole, i.e., the organism's concrete behavior, and there are other aspects which always form part of that whole, as, for instance, motivational aspects, affects, and values" (1950, p. 4). Piaget agrees with many other theorists that the child does not undergo separate intellectual and emotional development. The most seemingly objective pursuit of knowledge must be driven by some motive, and the directions in which drives and motives impel behavior depend on the operations and abilities made available by the growth of intelligence. Piaget describes a particular development of motivation in the adolescent, who can consider hypotheses which may or may not be true and work out what would follow if they were true (cf. Piaget, 1950, p. 148 ff.). Not only are the hypothesizing and deducing procedures of logic, mathematics, and science open to the adolescent, but also the world of the would-be social reformer. The adolescent's propensity for theorizing and criticizing emerges from his newly found ability to see the way the world is run as only one out of many possible ways, and to conceive of alternative ways that it might be run, as Piaget notes in Logic and Psychology (1953, p. 172 ff.). Such motivational aspects as these suggest some directions that grammar might take in turning away from sentences that have no purposive meaning, and toward sentences that touch on the motivational and developmental traits of students at
the grade levels where grammar is taught.

Lewis also comments on how the adolescent's new abilities to generalize abstractly may provide an important key to analyzing the link between expressed values and actual behavior. He writes, with references to observations made by Piaget (1932, p. 131):

When Piaget turned from children's games to the conduct of their everyday lives, he was struck by the apparent paradox that a child may accurately repeat adult precepts—though these may have little or no relevance to his actual behavior towards others—and yet at the same time be hardly aware of the principles of conduct by which he really lives. (Lewis, 1963, p. 224)

In this same context, Lewis proceeds to point out that the structure of language to which the student is exposed in school is both more complex and abstract than the dialect which dominates peer group conversation. "The linguistic education of the school provides him with a means of communication within a community as wide as the whole adult society, embracing the past as well as the present" (Lewis, p. 228). In other words, language study in the school should be opening the world of written language to students as sources for them to reflect on their own values and ideas, both through composing their own thought statements and through reading the statements written by others, however distant in time and circumstance. Thus the introspective and would-be social reformer tendencies of adolescent development can provide sources of topics that can
reach to the deep level of motivation in working with grammar and the sentence.

Certainly it is a broad question to ask what motivates children at the grade levels where grammar is usually taught. This is a question teachers have long sought answers for, hoping to "spice up" any number of content areas. In one sense, we might say the question has no ready answer; for if it had, teachers would not still be searching for (or giving up the search for) motivational devices. But in another sense, psychologists haven't lacked for knowledge of motivation; the problem has been how to connect curriculum content to such knowledge. This is where the humanistic education movement can make an important contribution to a reconceived grammar. Much of the curricular work in humanistic education solved the problem of adapting motivational theory to content by making some of the most central motivations—the concern with values and with personal identity, power, and connectedness (cf. Weinstein and Fantini, 1970)—the actual content of curriculum. While the curricular materials and approaches developed in these areas haven't been previously connected to grammar, an extensive array of effective exercises that involve sentence composition means that this resource area may be adapted to a reconceived way of teaching grammar that works with sentences of pointed content—often pointed at concerns touching the deeper levels of motivation in students.
What Grammar Teachers Need To Learn From Piaget

Piaget has described several insights that can help teachers understand how the nature of knowing can help explain both why many students don't "know" their formal grammar and what may be some effective means to help students learn sentence structure or other grammar areas. Piaget, to begin with, transcends the traditional alternatives of nativism and empiricism which have dominated the philosophical approaches to knowledge. He takes a psychological, rather than a logical route to epistemology, and, as many have noted, shifts the ground for inquiry from the question "What is knowledge?" to "How does knowledge develop and change?" The particular facets of Piaget's developmental psychology, or "genetic epistemology," as he often refers to as the field of his work, that bear directly on grammar teaching are his view of the active, constructivist nature of knowing and the late-developing capacity to know by way of abstract theory and thought. These apply to grammar in the first instance because formal grammar divorces the analysis of sentences from production of them, and in the second instance, because formal grammar is dominated by abstract terminology and rules which comprise a theory of "well-formed" sentences.

The passive sense of the "study of" grammar, in which there is a presumably stable body of knowledge to be taught
and learned, is simply inadequate if we want students to know anything. Piaget describes knowledge as something constructed by the subject in a dynamic relation with objects of knowledge. "To know an object is to act on it. To know is to modify, to transform the object. . . . Knowledge is not a copy of reality" (Piaget, 1964, p. 43). Piaget is not saying that any person, no matter the age or developmental level, can gain knowledge by these active means; he notes that the subject must possess structures with which to construct knowledge. We have seen earlier in this chapter the evidence to understand that the child possesses structures allowing him to acquire and use language with every syntactic pattern and resource available. But when grammar instruction shifts the "structures" to be mastered from actual language to abstract terms about language, the structures that the student must have in order to construct this knowledge are those capabilities Piaget assigns to the "formal operations" stage, which only begins to develop about the eleventh or twelfth year. The concrete operations stage prior to this time consists of "operational groupings of thought concerning objects that can be manipulated or known though the sense" (Piaget, 1950, p. 123, emphasis added). "These groupings are as yet far from constituting a formal logic applicable to all ideas and to all reasoning" (1950, pp. 145-146):
This is an essential point which must be stressed, for the sake both of the theory of intelligence and of its educational applications, if we wish to adapt teaching to the findings of developmental psychology as opposed to the logical basis of the scholastic tradition. . . . When children in the concrete operations stage cease manipulating objects, they usually are incapable of reasoning with simple verbal propositions. (1950, p. 146)

Thus we can begin to understand how the logical forms and propositions of formal grammar are not mastered by elementary students, even though it is common to have grammar textbooks in series from the third to the eighth grades. Piaget warns us that "up to the age of eleven or twelve, a particular logical form is still not independent of its concrete content" (1950, p. 147). Students in grades three to six can manipulate images, feelings, and ideas in language, and syntax will shift with the manipulation, but syntax itself is not directly accessible to students' thinking operations (cf. p. 153).

A teacher, whose intellectual maturation would indicate that the formal operations stage of thinking has been mastered for some time, may see how formal grammar can make sense and explain language phenomena in an understandable way--yet only the most intellectually mature students, probably the same ones who are adept at the abstract formal mathematics operations of algebra, have developed to the stage where they can make sense of what seems so clear to the teacher. Additionally, the teacher has usually learned
the abstract terms and rules of grammar through the concrete task of explaining them in the process of teaching.

Vygotsky also understood the basis that would make formal grammar incomprehensible before the formal operations stage, though he did not state this implication directly: "A concept is a complex and genuine act of thought that cannot be taught by drilling but can be accomplished only when the child's mental development itself has reached the requisite level" (1962, p. 82). Abstract terms in an abstract theory are not comprehended by children thinking at concrete levels.

But the real question left after all the foregoing observations is what one hopes to gain from having students master an abstract system of linguistic terminology and rules, when language development studies provide massive documentation showing that the preschool child has already mastered the ability to comprehend and produce all of the linguistic structures which formal grammar would teach students to describe abstractly. Wouldn't it be better to use our work with the sentence as a way to have students exercise and develop their capacities to think and to bring thought through meanings and into language--capacities which the child has, as revealed throughout the literature reviewed in this chapter? The fault of current grammar approaches, in fact of any conceivable formal grammar, lies in the method of analysis that abstracts surface syntactic structures from sentences, breaking these into elements far below the level
of the organic units of thought and language that sentences in actual discourse show. Only a system so ill-conceived and incomprehensible to students could require that instruction year after year go over the same material—because it hasn't been learned.

The positive side of the insights which grammar teachers may derive from Piaget is that we may expect students to understand the structure of sentences and forms of standard usage if we give students an active role in these matters.

Good pedagogy must involve presenting the child with situations in which he himself experiments in the broadest sense of that term—trying things out to see what happens, manipulating symbols, posing questions and seeking his own answers, reconciling what he finds at one time with what he finds at another, and comparing his findings with those of other children. (Piaget, from remarks made in an address at Berkeley, June 1963, quoted in Murray, 1972, p. 7)

Chapter V develops a number of examples of how these characteristics of "good pedagogy" may be applied to grammar teaching. It is particularly worth noting that Piaget stresses the importance of having students cooperate in their active work with what they are learning. "Cooperation is the first of a series of forms of behavior which are important for the constitution and development of logic," (1950, p. 162) and, as well, for decreasing the negative effects of egocentricity.

Throughout this chapter we have seen reasons to understand the failures of formal grammar discussed in Chapter II,
as well as hints of possible ways to reconceive grammar in light of a clearer view of the relationship between language and thought. The principal implications were that work with sentences can have a psychologically sound basis through giving students active roles in manipulating thought and syntax, through using thought content which sometimes touches the roots of motivation, through presuming and therefore using the child's intrinsic abilities and a vast array of syntactic resources, and through stressing vocabulary and semantics even with concepts the student has apparently already learned. In all this, there are many reasons for deemphasizing any aspect of formal grammar—in particular, abstract terms and descriptions of basic syntactic patterns. The next chapter will assess several grammar texts and other resources in light of their consistency with the insights developed in this and the previous chapter.
CHAPTER IV

ASSESSING CURRENT PRACTICES AND RESOURCES IN MOVING TOWARD A NEW SYNTHESIS

Assessment of Grammar Textbooks

Many English teachers derive their conception of grammar and their teaching methods from whatever textbooks that they are asked to use. One logical step in initiating reform of grammar teaching is to have teachers analyze their own textbooks in the light of criteria drawn from the kinds of literature reviewed in Chapters II and III. The first part of this chapter reflects such an analysis that in-service English teachers did in three different sessions of "Begone Dull Grammar!"—a three credit in-service course offered at Worcester State College, Worcester, Massachusetts, in summer 1974, spring 1975, and summer 1976. This assessment has been expanded by my own close analysis of at least one grade-level text in each of the six series, identified below, that teachers were using. Each criterion used in the assessment will be explained, followed by a summary of the analysis of the textbooks.

The textbooks. The following information about each textbook series includes, besides bibliographical data, the grade levels covered by the series, the particular grade
level(s) texts given close analysis, and the percentage of the fifty-five teachers in the in-service course who used that series. The teachers estimated that they were spending an average of 45% of their English curriculum using these texts to teach terminology, definitions, and rules for parts of speech, usage, and mechanics. Copyright dates for the texts are for the edition that was being used by the in-service teachers, although my own review of more recent editions for all except the Roberts (1967) series indicates no substantial changes in either content or balance in more recent editions. The textbooks are:

Conlin, David A., and Herman, George R. Modern Grammar and Composition. New York: American Book Company, 1967. This series has four texts, one for each grades 9-12; the ninth grade text was used for close analysis. 5% of the in-service teachers were using this text.

Pollock, Thomas and Loughlin, Richard L. The Macmillan English Series. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967. This series has texts for grades 3-8; the Teacher's Annotated Edition of the eighth grade text was closely analyzed. 15% of the in-service teachers were using this text.

Roberts, Paul. The Roberts English Series. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1967. This series has texts for grades 3-9; the teacher's edition of the seventh grade text was

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1 On the first day of each course session, teachers completed a survey indicating this and other information. Percent of time in using the textbook for formal grammar varied by grade level, grades 2-4 indicating a mean of 61%; grades 5-6, 43%; grades 7-9, 42%; and grades 10-12, 22%. 

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closely analyzed. 7% of the in-service teachers were using this text.

Shane, Harold G., et al. *Using Good English*. River Forest, Illinois: Laidlaw Brothers, Publishers, 1961. This series has texts for grades 3-8; the teachers' edition of the seventh grade text was closely analyzed. 24% of the in-service teachers were using this text.

Tressler, J. C., Christ, Henry I., and Terino, Anthony E. *English in Action*. Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1960. This series has texts for grades 7-12; the teacher's edition for both eighth and eleventh grades were closely examined. 20% of the in-service teachers were using this text.

Warriner, John E., Whitten, Mary E., and Griffith, Francis. *Warriner's English Grammar and Composition*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc., 1973. This series has texts for grades 7-12; texts for grades nine and twelve were closely analyzed. 29% of the in-service teachers were using this text.

As noted, the six textbook series reviewed in this chapter were those which had been used by teachers who took the "Begone Dull Grammar!" course. Subsequent examination of other publishers' grammar textbook series has failed to discover a single text significantly better than those reviewed here, in terms of the criteria noted. As with the six series discussed in the chapter, these other series differ principally in the degree to which they incorporate modern linguistic conclusions and content. All are reductionist, in that they ignore content meaning in sentences and deal with one isolated formal property of language at a time. All are also abstract in their terminology and formulation of rules. The specific additional texts
examined are as follows:

Blumenthal, Joseph C.  

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Dawson, Mildred A., Johnson, Eric W., Zollinger, Marian and Elwell, M. Ardell.  

Greene, Harry A., Loomis, Kate Ashley, Biedenharn, Norma W., and Davis, Pauline C.  

Guth, Hans P., and Schuster, Edgar H.  

______.  


Kitzhaber, Albert R. (General Editor),  

Postman, Neil, Morine, Harold, and Morine, Greta.  

Tanner, Bernard R., Vittatoe, Craig and Shutes, Robert E.  

**Criterion 1.** Textbooks from each of the series were examined to assess the proportion and kind of formal grammar (abstract terminology, definitions, and rules for grammar, usage, and mechanics), to note any claims or disclaimers
they made about their effectiveness, and for any reference to language development or grammar research. Recalling the statement that "the teaching of formal grammar has a negligible or, because it usually displaces some instruction and practice in actual composition, even a harmful effect on the improvement of writing" (Braddock, et al., 1963, p. 38), and in view of the research cited in Chapters I, II, and III, there should by all rights be some kind of disclaimer for the practical value of the formal grammar that is contained in the text. Short of this degree of honesty, which is unlikely from publishers intending to market their own textbooks, at least the authors of the texts should not make claims that have no basis in, or have been refuted by, research on grammar teaching. It seems logical that the teacher's guide would indicate something of what language development or grammar research shows about children's learning of syntax. Finally, as pointed out in Chapter III, texts prior to seventh grade, particularly, should not count on using abstract terms, since the formal operations stage of cognitive development would be necessary for understanding these terms and applying them to actual uses of language (Piaget, 1950, pp. 145-150). Based on assessment of the texts previously noted, we can make the following statements.

The content of all of the texts consists of formal grammar terms, definitions, rules, and exercises. Warriner, et al. (1973), Shane, et al. (1961), and Tressler, et al.
(1960)—the three series used by 73% of the teachers involved in this assessment—all use traditional, Latinate grammar. The Shane, et al. text was the most regressive, because of such "rules" as the statement that all nouns and pronouns have gender and case, which simply isn't true for English. Four series keep all their grammar chapters together, two in the first half and two in the last half of the text. The other two intersperse other topics among the grammar chapters. All texts are presented as complete English courses, except for the literature component; however, the Roberts (1967) series is an exception, in that it includes literature as well.

The three non-traditional grammar series include one structural text (Conlin and Herman, 1967) and two that blend structural and transformational grammar (Roberts, 1967, and Pollock and Loughlin, 1967). All series seem excessive in the amount of abstract terminology and linguistic jargon that they use, regardless of grade level. This is particularly reprehensible in the three series that begin at the third grade level. Roberts, for instance, has 83 terms and 77 rules for the texts in grades 3-6; the ninth grade text by Warriner, et al. has 48 terms and 36 usage rules; the Pollock and Loughlin text has the fewest terms—39. In short, all texts were formal grammar texts, ensuring by their content that formal grammar would dominate the English curriculum to the extent the texts were used. As is true
for all the judgments made in this assessment, the in-service teachers' conclusions agreed with my own.

In the area of making claims or disclaimers, none of the texts made disclaimers about their effectiveness—and each made some claim either unsupportable or directly contradicted by the research data in the literature. The Warriner, et al. text labels the series "proven year after year in classrooms," and says in the textbook's preface to the student that grammar study is useful because it "enables us to make rules about how to use our language. . . . Such rules could not be understood without the vocabulary of grammar" (p. v). In terms of language acquisition, this claim is absurd since most features of standard usage are developed prior to any formal instruction; in terms of usage itself, Pooley declares such rules of usage to be both false and unnecessary (1974, pp. 179-180). Warriner, et al. tells the students "you will be able to improve your English" through use of the text (p. vi), despite the repeated failure of research to substantiate this claim.

The Shane, et al. text makes a simple statement that students will develop a "high degree of competence in their use of the English language" (p. iii) through grammar study. The Tressler, et al. text claims grammar study will "develop language power" (whatever that is) and provide the means to speak and write effective sentences, test the correctness of sentences, punctuate to convey meaning, and get meaning out
of complicated sentences (p. viii). These, say the authors, were proved in classrooms—a claim no research study can support.

Roberts claims his text "will improve writing by thorough and sequential teaching of the main features of the writing system and the nature of syntax" (p. T1). Pollock and Loughlin, after equating grammar with the basic structure of the discipline of English, assert that "linguistic facts and principles enable effective communication" (p. T5). The Conlin and Herman series advises students that "a knowledge of grammar will help you understand how your language communicates. It is an exciting study because language is such an intimate part of your life. . . . Familiarity with grammar will serve as a major bridge to the improvement of written composition" (p. 15); later in the text students are told "English is essentially a noun-verb language. Only when we identify these word classes is communication effective" (p. 73), an incredible claim, to say the least.

Not surprisingly, since it would contradict their claims, none of the texts make direct reference to grammar research. The Shane, et al., and the Pollock and Loughlin series, however, do note the high degree of competence which students already have in using language, from the time they begin school. Overall, the three series used by 73% of the teachers surveyed are distinguished by their lack of any linguistic scholarship, while the other three seem burdened by their
overuse of "facts and principles" from this scholarship. In short, all of the texts rely totally on uses of formal grammar which research doesn't support, they make no references to this research, and--on the contrary--they make false claims about the effectiveness of their grammar approaches for the goals they cite.

**Criterion 2.** The second set of factors used in assessing the grammar textbook series questioned whether the texts had students produce their own sentences, or manipulate the syntax of sentences, and whether the sentences that were given as examples, or that students were asked to write, were characterized by thought and meaning in the content of the sentences, as opposed to the "pointless content" of sentences intended only for analysis of surface structure. The importance of having students produce sentences as part of their study of sentence structure derives from implications of Piaget's (1964, p. 176; 1973, pp. 98-99) characterization of the active nature of knowing discussed in the preceding chapter. Also, it follows that if a grammar text is intended to develop students' skills in using sentences, then the grammar study would include exercises in writing sentences. Four of the texts, including their accompanying workbooks, had no sentence writing by students at all. Instead, these texts had students identify formal structures or make corrections in given sentences. The other two texts showed minimal student sentence production in their exercises; the
text used by only 5% of the teachers (Conlin and Herman) had
the most sentence writing, including a chapter on sentence building. None of the texts, however, could be judged to
give students any significant amount of practice in producing
sentences.

The importance of whether a text has students manipulate
the thought and syntax of sentences is particularly based on
the studies utilizing sentence combining (Bateman and
Zidonis, 1964; Mellon, 1971; and O'Hare, 1973) which resulted
in growth of students' ability to produce a wider variety of
sentence structures. The importance of this factor is also
based on the "active, manipulative nature of knowing"
discussed by Piaget (1964, p. 176) and on the common sense
insight that formal grammar is intended to describe the
possible ways to state something accurately, in terms of
structure, and thus implies a certain "substitutability"
that enables the same idea to be said in several different,
each equally correct ways. The five textbook series used by
95% of the teachers had absolutely no form of syntactic
manipulation. Each sentence was shown in one and only one
rigid form. The Conlin and Herman text had a total of less
than three pages of exercises in which students were asked
to revise a sentence or add modifiers to expand examples of
sentence patterns. With these minor exceptions, no active
manipulation to explore the possibilities of syntax were
allowed for in the textbooks.
The final aspect of the second criterion is whether sentences in the texts had "pointless content" or whether they were characterized by the elements of actual communication—the meaning or message to be conveyed, the speaker's or writer's intent and tone, and the purpose of the message in the context of the communication situation. Pooley cites these factors as essential in teaching usage (1974, pp. 24-29). They also reflect Vygotsky's assertions about the primacy of motive and inseparability of thought and language (1962, pp. 150-153), discussed in Chapter III. Further, these factors of actual communication mirror the underlying three-way structure of discourse (sender, message, receiver). Insofar as one will be able to discuss the logic or the rhetorical effectiveness of a sentence, there must have been an intention to use the sentence to express a thought worth stating. On the contrary, neither a single teacher in the in-service course nor I was able to find even a single example of a sentence that had these meaning qualities. The next chapter will contrast the types of pointless content "dummy" sentences found in these texts with proverbs, epigrams, maxims, short poems, and other single sentence thought statements. The absence of any examples of sentences that might provoke thought, stimulate discussion, or relieve boredom was the strongest negative factor in every text reviewed. In summary, if one accepts the factors in criterion two as important, then none of the grammar texts
examined could be deemed remotely acceptable.

**Criterion 3.** The next consideration in assessing grammar textbooks concerns usage. Modern linguists take care to distinguish between grammar—the study of the structures of English as it is used—and usage—the choice of language forms depending on factors of time (including age of speakers), place, situation, and whether the form of communication is speech or writing. The problem in referring to grammar textbooks is aptly summarized by Meckel: "Textbooks used in the school are extremely conservative and even in error with respect to usage" (1963, p. 977). Pooley (1974, p. 34 ff.) explains that rules of usage are made pertaining to specific situations, in certain times, for definite purposes; but these circumstances are gradually forgotten as the rule continues to be taught, and thus a rule comes to be applied more widely than it was intended. Pooley indicates that, while it is important for teachers to have knowledge of which items of usage are indeed considered non-standard by the experts who keep track of the use of language in dictionaries and by educated writers, it is more important for teachers to develop "a linguistically sound attitude toward problems of usage" (p. 5). It is "art of appropriateness," not the pseudo-science of correctness, to which English teachers should direct students. Appropriateness, which Pooley says is the foundation of correct usage, depends on the needs of communication, influenced by factors of meaning, intention,
and tone (p. 28). Error correction is "less than half the teaching of good usage," says Pooley. More crucial is getting students to recognize the "nature of communication, ... of how communication determines usage," and how "the selection of appropriate words, idioms, and constructions" creates "the gradations of intent and tone in every communication" (pp. 28-29).

Dialect is a concept from linguistic study that could be related to teaching students to increase their sensitivity to the appropriateness of alternatives in usage. One reason to encourage this is that the notion of dialect almost automatically brings to bear considerations of geographical region, social situation, time and age--the factors which linguists say should determine our judgments about the appropriateness of usage. In many cases the same items of usage would be examined, whether through reference to dialect or the textbook chapters on usage. The main difference is that textbooks will tend to ignore the communication factors beyond so-called correctness. The focus on dialect can clarify the dominance of standard dialect in books and among educated people, thus making mastery of this dialect a goal related to being able to comprehend and emulate writers and speakers who use the standard dialect. Alternative dialects, including especially dialects spoken by students, thus needn't be disparaged, as they are in a "correct usage" approach. The fact is that here are far fewer communication
problems brought on by the dialects of American English than is the case in many other languages. Relative to other nations, a prominent characteristic of the occupying of the United States has been the constant mingling of settlers from one part with settlers from another part (cf. Baugh, 1957, pp. 412-416). This characteristic has persisted up to this day, with the resulting effects on the high degree of uniformity in American English usage increased by the rise of television, modern transportation, newspapers, and magazines. The great contrast among dialects prevalent in England, France, and Italy at the time when their vernacular language replaced Latin as the official language of government and learning, has simply never existed in America. Yet despite this relative uniformity, American textbooks continue to treat minor dialect variations as if they were some strange variant of English needing to be eliminated in the interest of communication. Even where strong dialect differences exist, the history of European languages suggests the superior results of a bi-lingual type of approach, relying on cultural and social factors rather than education for any leveling of dialects to one standard with minor variations.

With these considerations in mind, several questions may be developed to assess the textbooks in terms of usage. First, we may ask whether any texts deal with communication factors beyond a general notion of "correctness," or the
standard versus non-standard distinction. The answer is that not even one of the texts examined considers, along with correctness, other factors affecting communication, including the approach of dialect. This may largely be due to the characteristic of pointless content in sentences, indicated earlier. Second, we may ask whether the usage advice in the text is accurate in terms of specific items of usage, using examples Pooley describes (1974, Chapters 6 and 7). One might question whether Pooley's standards are too high; for the most part, his criticisms of usage rules given in grammar texts rest on exceptions which were judged acceptable through the consensus of many usage authorities. Accepting these standards, all textbooks examined were found to be in error in at least six cases, and were unquestionably conservative in their pronouncements.

A third question regarding usage concerns whether any texts give particular attention to those non-standard usage items which are most frequent and which tend to incur the greatest social approbation. None of the texts examined do this; instead, all give equal weight to every usage item and piece of advice. A final question is whether any provision is made for identification and correction of individual errors or inappropriate choices needing improvement--particularly in the framework of adding standard dialect, rather than replacing the student's usage. The answer here again is that not one of the texts examined gives either a
diagnostic test or specific proofreading instructions that would help students see which of their own usage habits tended to be non-standard. As may be applied to grammar texts in general, they seem to try to teach about every possible error and inappropriate choice, rather than to help students see their own particular errors and needs for improvement. The one exception is the Conlin and Herman series, which only in the eleventh grade text has students analyze their own writing for "errors and shortcomings that cut down on the effectiveness of communication" (1967, p. G5). A closer look at this text, however, suggests it is not equipped to give students accurate advice about either correctness or effectiveness. In all, not one grammar text used by teachers in the in-service course had a single positive rating in the usage criterion factors used to assess these textbooks.

Criterion 4. The fourth criterion used to assess the selected textbooks asks whether the texts deal with word meanings, and if so, what relation is shown between the work with word meaning, usage, and grammar. This was deemed to be an important variable for two main reasons. First, language development studies cited in Chapter III indicate the slow, gradual development of a person's lexicon of word meanings. Therefore, learning in this area promises much greater growth than in syntax and the application of grammar rules, since children develop these latter areas quite early,
before the third grade in nearly every instance. Second, Pooley's recommendations stress the importance of "more than meanings from words. There are elements of purpose and intent which are controlled largely by the choices of words and their arrangement in sentences" (1974, p. 23). Thus, as also reviewed in Chapter III relative to concept formation, it misleading students to have them think they are learning word meanings simply by studying lists of vocabulary, word prefixes, roots, and suffixes.

Only the Pollock and Loughlin series has no section on word meanings. The Shane, et al. text has a total of eight pages on vocabulary. Warriner, et al., has two chapters on words, while the Tressler, et al., and Conlin and Herman texts have one chapter each. All of these textbooks isolate work with word meanings from work with the sentence and from usage and grammar. The Roberts series works with vocabulary in its literary selections, allowing for context and intended effect to be discussed—thus being the only text examined which seemed positive in the light of criterion four. Once again, the lack of pointed content meaning in the example and exercise sentences may largely account for the overly simplistic vocabulary and the lack of opportunity to work with word meanings in the grammar and usage portions of all textbooks examined.

Criterion 5. Many teachers may believe that grammar teaching can be made more effective if it is connected to
writing and speaking assignments. In any case, this might make grammar less boring to those who find it so.\(^2\) Certainly if teachers and textbooks hold the view that grammar applies to writing, and many say that it provides the vocabulary for discussing writing, then the textbooks ought to intersperse writing and speaking activities among, and relate them to, the grammar units. Do the textbooks do this? Not even a single one among those examined does. The Roberts and the Shane, et al. series intersperse grammar among other units, but don't show any connection between them. Warriner, et al., and the other series segregate composition from grammar; yet even in the sections of composition, these texts don't call on students to write with any noteworthy frequency. The Warriner, et al. text, for instance, teaches 48 rules about composition. As with several other criteria that have been used in this assessment, the lack of pointed content meaning in the sentences of the texts limits the possibility for this final criterion's being met, as will become clear in Chapter V. We conclude this assessment still without being able to find a single text coming close to meeting the criteria used in this analysis.

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\(^2\)In-service teachers, both in the "Begone Dull Grammar!" course and in a workshop meeting of Worcester English teachers in March 1977, indicated their perception of grammar study as boring. More than 70% in each group rated grammar above "5" on a 10-point continuum of "interesting" to "boring."
Summary of the textbook assessment. The textbooks examined were those used by central Massachusetts English teachers who took an in-service course in improving grammar teaching. An examination of a number of additional textbook series indicates that what is typical of the sample used is typical of others not mentioned, as well. What can be said of these texts might better be called an indictment than an assessment.

All are dominated by formal grammar—terms, definitions, and rules. All make unsubstantiated or false claims for their effectiveness. None seek to acquaint teachers with relevant research findings on language development or grammar teaching. All have pointless content in sample sentences. Those few which ever have students write their own sentences do not ask for meaningful content. Students

3An exception, in part, is the series for grades 1-8 titled New Directions In English, Harper and Row, 1971. Among the exceptions to other texts, the grade 8 Teacher's Edition indicates the following: 19% of the text is on formal grammar; English structural grammar is compared to Patami, a South American Indian language, as part of the commentary on a narrative of a family lost in a South American rain forest and having to communicate with natives; the text makes no claim for grammar being effective, other than as a way to teach a method of inquiry into language structure; word meanings are used in a reading context, and other features of language are dealt with, also; and there is some application of factors allowing for judgments as to appropriateness of expression. Nothing in the series, however, remedies the problem of meaningless sentences, lack of syntactic manipulation, usage inaccuracies, or the unreasonable basis for starting formal grammar instruction in grade three.
neither manipulate nor produce grammar as part of their study, using the textbooks. In all, advice on usage items is inaccurate in places and devoid of the context of communication factors which would allow for judgments as to appropriateness of expression. None of the texts help students discover specific areas in their own speech or writing that need improvement; instead, all teach about an excessive number of errors that students might make—but most of which, in fact, they don't. None connect sentence work either to work with word meanings or to writing, speaking, or reading assignments. English textbook series are clearly a large part of the problem with grammar teaching, and offer almost nothing toward a solution. Elements which may be synthesized in order to seek solutions must be sought elsewhere, in curricular resources and developments not presently contained in grammar textbooks. After much darkness, this look at alternative resources will, hopefully, contain a little light.

Applicable Curriculum Developments Toward A New Synthesis

Several resources, other than textbooks that are available to teachers show some degree of consistency with what grammar research and literature on language reveal, and with the criteria that were used to assess grammar textbooks in this chapter. None of these resources is seen as sufficient in itself; the shortcomings in each will be part of the
following discussion. It then becomes the task of the final chapter to further develop and synthesize these approaches in a reconceived grammar system that can be a foundation for persuading English teachers to reconstruct their grammar curriculum.

**Single sentence discourse.** The concept of discourse is defined by Moffett and Wagner as: "... any complete communication having a sender, receiver, and message bound by a purpose" (1976, p. 12). Moffett spent an earlier book (1968a) describing a theory of discourse and related issues, as a rationale for his curriculum and methods text (1968b, 1973). Another definition occurs in an effort by Young and Becker (1965) to define style: "A writer's style, we believe, is the characteristic route he takes through all the choices presented in both writing and prewriting stages. It is the manifestation of his conception of the topic, modified by his audience, situation, and intention--what we call his 'universe of discourse'" (quoted in O'Hare, 1973, p. 74). The notions of having a writer, speaker, or sender and an audience, hearer, or receiver for a message or topic, all influenced by a purpose are aspects of actual communication that are missing from the grammar approaches of textbooks and the traditional curriculum. These aspects supply critical missing ingredients for making grammar take on the characteristics of language and thought discussed in Chapter III--and for implementing the overall approach to teaching
usage, discussed earlier in this chapter, as recommended by Pooley (1974, pp. 23-29).

The notion of discourse limited to a single sentence is an appropriate concession to the often unobserved fact that the characteristic boundary of grammar, its "universe," so to speak, is the single sentence. Once the single sentence of any grammar approach, whether analytical or productive, is joined to the realm of discourse, then all the considerations of logic and rhetoric, of intent and motivation, become relevant--along with whatever syntactic or other grammar work might be done with the sentence. At first consideration, one might not think there are many forms of discourse which occur naturally within just one sentence. Moffett mentions several in suggesting that work with single sentence discourse be substituted for regular grammar: "Some complete discourses are one sentence long--certain poems, including some haiku, and such things as maxims, proverbs and epigrams" (1968a, p. 179). The list may be lengthened quite substantially, as the final chapter will indicate. There are certainly enough forms of complete discourses that are one sentence long to allow any of the work with sentences that grammar teachers do to be done completely with whole discourse sentences--in contrast to grammar textbooks, which offer nothing but pointless content in all sentence examples. What is more, single sentence discourses may become focal points for diverging into a range of other
language arts activities, and might provide the point of convergence for many of these activities, as well. The next chapter will illustrate the possible points of divergence and convergence.

Moffett's recommendation for what might be done with whole discourse sentences may seem shallow and off-hand in regards to syntactic manipulation; that, and the fact that his recommendations for using single sentence discourse have appeared in contexts where he is arguing against grammar teaching, may account for many teachers' not perceiving his proposals as a system for teaching grammar. For instance, Moffett writes: "If students write these discourses, exchange them, and tinker with them, in a spirit of creative play, they can learn an enormous amount about significant syntactic possibilities" (1968a, p. 180). "Tinkering with them" hardly strikes a teacher as a methodology. This is one aspect of Moffett's notion of single sentence discourse that may need to be developed in order for teachers to see its usefulness in improving their grammar curriculum.

Further, Moffett actually seems to disparage single sentences, in the course of his arguing against formal grammar teaching:

A severe limitation of both older and new linguistics is that they deal with no structure larger than a sentence. (1968a, p. 182)

But no reasonable unit exists—surely no arbitrary sequence of sentences or paragraphs—until one reaches that unit which
is determined by some speaker's decision to open his figurative mouth somewhere and to close it somewhere else. It's about time the sentence was put in its place. (1968a, p. 187)

While it is not the position taken in this dissertation that students should write nothing but single sentence compositions in a grammar teacher's class, the next chapter will illustrate the range of uses for sentence work that gives the sentence a more exalted position than Moffett thinks it deserves.

Two further reasons tend to make Moffett's contribution to reconceiving grammar incomplete. For one thing, the Interaction materials (1973) and the second edition text (1976) stress such a thorough-going individualization of his earlier curriculum that many teachers are likely to have a global response, based on the issue of how far they may wish to go in individualizing, and thus overlook a varied curriculum that includes much work with sentences. Moreover, this radical individualization, in which students, directed by the Interaction materials, simultaneously engage in different group and solo English activities, may take the teacher out of an important role that Vygotsky called "the zone of proximal development" (1962, p. 104). In this role, the teacher's more advanced development would provide a means to bring up ideas and vocabulary that could draw students ahead, into paths of development they are ready to enter if stimulated to do so. The second feature making
Moffett's contribution in single sentence discourse incomplete is his failure to distinguish some of the sentence forms he recommends, particularly haiku, epigrams, and many short poems, which feature tight embedding and clause reduction in their syntactic structure. These are features of very mature development; students might well be asked to "undo" or recreate this sequence of development by expanding and rewriting as several sentences what is said in these kinds of single sentence composition.

In using the resources developed by Moffett for the notion of single sentence discourse, it is important to recognize his contribution to expanding the definition of grammar to include both production of sentences and use of forms that work best with pointed content—thus moving away from any particular method of superficial analysis, such as the labelling of parts of speech. Mostly because many teachers perceive that others—administrators, parents, colleagues, and even some students—expect them to teach something that can be called "grammar" and can be used to work on "grammar objectives," it is important to designate single sentence discourse as part of grammar, if many of the flaws of formal grammar previously discussed are to be remedied.

**Authentic sentence work with affective concerns.**

Single sentence discourse forms, in themselves, do not require any particular type of content. In trying to link
sentence work with student motives, many teachers may want to have students make use of topics dealing with some of the personal concerns typical of their age. The "humanistic education movement" has stimulated a number of teachers to search for direct routes to their students' motivations and values. Workshop courses and many different books filled with "exercises" have given some English teachers the knowledge that if they wish to approach student feelings, motives, and values directly, then there are strategies for doing so. While no one may have suggested that grammar can be a part of such strategies, such a possibility becomes apparent once grammar is reconceived in the light of single sentence discourse and syntactic manipulation. For any teacher looking for sentence production assignments with meaningful content stimuli, the array of self-awareness and human relations activities that involve single sentences becomes especially valuable. The number of such sentence composing activities tends to go unnoticed; yet when given the assignment to look for exercises which featured or could feature single sentence composition and revision, teachers in the summer 1974 "Begone Dull Grammar!" course found some 64 of these in just one text (Hawley, Simon, and Britton, 1973). When the different planes of thought that lead to sentence production are used as a model on which to reconstruct grammar curricula, then not only does production become more important, but also the role of inner motivation becomes
instrumental.

Probably the two most flexible and easily adapted models for humanistic education, which involve sentence work as an incidental instrument, are values clarification and the Weinstein and Fantini (1970) conception of identity, connectedness, and power as the three areas of concern that people appear to spend most of their time thinking about. Canfield and Wells have developed a series of unfinished sentences to use in probing each of these concerns (1976, pp. 211-213). The next chapter will take up what students might be asked to do in and with these kinds of sentences by using sentence-completion and expansion activities— including the "safe" approach of composing them for characters in stories. This latter approach gives a valuable means for getting students to look beneath a character's actions and words—to his thoughts and motives, making use of the Vygotsky model in its reverse direction.

This area of resources will be valuable to develop in reconceiving grammar, because it holds the promise of adding several dimensions missing from current grammar, yet warranted by the conclusions about the inseparability of motives from the language-thought relationship, discussed in Chapter III. In particular, the resources may be adapted to the endeavor to help grammar teaching: get students to see how sentences can be powerful means to affect thought and action; increase students' valuing the expressive powers of
language, particularly through the sentence, in terms of their own experiences and concerns; go to the deep roots of thought and language; and provide content for sentence work that has a meaningful context for students.

**Sentence building and combining resources.** Sentence-combining practice in systems such as those of Mellon (1971) and O'Hare (1973) provided one of the few examples of successful grammar treatments in the grammar research reviewed in Chapter II. These approaches show consistency with the active, manipulative characterization of knowing described by Piaget (1964, p. 176; 1973, pp. 98-99). As previously discussed, a more flexible adaptation of sentence combining is needed to be applied to the composing as well as reconstruction of whole discourse sentences, so that aspects of logic, rhetoric, and semantics implicit in actual language use may be infused in the methods of grammatical analysis. There have been several sentence-combining texts produced in the wake of the positive results of research on this method; probably the most useful is O'Hare's *sentence-craft* (student and teacher's texts, 1975)—since it contains the "everyday language" signal system with which O'Hare (1973) earlier proved the irrelevance of transformational terminology and rules for achieving syntactic growth through sentence combining. This text is probably better as a teacher resource than as a class text, because O'Hare did not go beyond the a-rhetorical approach of his earlier
research design, nor did he develop flexibility for the rigid sequence of self-contained units which empirical research controls necessitated.

Syntactic manipulation—a broader concept than sentence combining, since it includes sentence expansion, revision, clause reduction, and work with alternative word choice as well—offers one of the most potent weapons in the arsenal of improved sentence analysis resources. It is easier to learn, more readily applied, and more firmly grounded in both research and theory than any of the taxonomic methods of analysis. But the full potential of syntactic manipulation depends on relating the various resources for expanding, embedding, reducing, and joining clauses to the logic and pointed meaning of the sentence-thought. A more complex idea, perhaps one made more complex by discussion and questioning, organically requires more complex syntax, in most cases. It divorces judgment from composition and invites linguistic folly to teach students to produce more complex sentences without linking this to producing more complex thoughts, and without questioning how effective such sentences are in view of the sender, receiver, message, and binding purpose. This is the enlarged context warranted for sentence combining and the development of syntactic maturity.

Mechanics: diagnostic spelling and punctuation by vocal cues. The skills of spelling and punctuation are technically outside the realm of grammar, as most linguists define
it. However, in the overall concern for teaching basic skills, getting students to spell and punctuate correctly certainly has high priority with most teachers and parents. The problems of run-on sentences, fragments, and the "comma-splice blunder"—all considered part of grammar by most textbooks and teachers—on closer examination seem more profitably seen as punctuation problems, as noted in Chapter II.

Probably the best resources, in view of what has been shown in grammar research and in the previously discussed nature and causes of errors, are described by Moffett and Wagner (1976, pp. 228-248)—though many of these curriculum developments may be traced to other sources as well. Carol Chomsky (1970) provided the basis for Moffett's approach to diagnostic spelling, which he and Wagner apply to a wide context of prolific writing and reading, proofreading, spelling games, and special books. Spell It Right! (Shaw, 1965) is an additional source of potential value to teachers. Moffett and Wagner offer a convincing argument for an individualized approach to error correction: "Any given student makes only certain errors. He should not waste his time surveying the whole field but should zero in on his own particular difficulties" (1976, p. 229). This is in marked contrast to the treatment of errors in grammar textbooks reviewed earlier in this chapter. In their section on spelling, Moffett and Wagner develop clear analyses of the
types of spelling errors students make, matching these to remedial procedures. The strength of their approaches may be seen in the contexts that they provide for learning to improve spelling, so that this skill area is not isolated in an abstract "elements" approach to English. Likewise, in composing and studying sentences that have pointed thought content many words will be used that allow for incidental work with both spelling and vocabulary.

Moffett and Wagner note that some studies have shown that at least half of students' spelling errors are with words they know how to spell--errors of carelessness, rather than of ignorance--thus calling for effective proofreading, rather than instruction and drill. They also place value on experiences in hearing, saying, seeing, and writing words as a potent force in gradually refining students' spelling. Further, they realize the phenomenon of "growth errors" (cf. Bruner, et al., 1966, p. 322) will mean that as students "stretch" their vocabulary and seek to write whatever they can say, they will make errors that wouldn't have appeared had they "played it safe." This phenomena also may contribute to an initial increase in punctuation errors as students begin writing longer and more complex sentences.

While the volume of reading and writing that Moffett and Wagner suggest extends far beyond the current expectations of many teachers and students, this volume becomes more manageable when done in the context of one sentence
compositions. The limited scope of the sentence allows a gradual and realistic increase in student production—one which brings into play all the transcriptive, syntactic, semantic, rhetorical, logical, and motivational aspects of composition and comprehension. The limited length of a sentence means that almost any and all of these aspects may be dealt with—in contrast to the overwhelming task this would present in dealing with longer discourse.

Regarding punctuation, the main approach suggested by Moffett and Wagner is to have students punctuate unpunctuated texts, which might also include various one sentence texts. The principle of teaching is to raise sound-pause intuition to the level of conscious awareness.

Punctuation is not part of grammar. It may reflect grammar, only because intonation does. Above all, good punctuation is a set of signals showing the reader how to read the flow of words as the speaker would say them. It should be presented to learners this way, not as rules. The auditory principles that underlie the rules are simpler to understand, more profound, and more accurate. . . . Moreover, to understand the old rules you have to understand first a whole body of grammatical terminology like restrictive clause or appositive, and even if one understands this, it isn't sufficient because grammar alone does not determine punctuation. The factors of meaning and rhetoric also come into play. Much punctuation renders tone and emphasis. (Moffett and Wagner, 1976, p. 236)

As the last two sentences of the foregoing passage make clear, it takes sentences with the meaning elements, allowing for rhetoric, tone, and emphasis, to permit students to see
how punctuation relates to these factors. A particular advantage to practicing punctuation by vocal cues is that unpunctuated passages may be taken from a variety of reading material, with the content capable of interesting students in going on to read the entire selection after completing the punctuation exercise. Likewise, portions of current common readings may be excerpted for such punctuation practice.

It should by this point be apparent that it is possible to reconceive grammar in a way that is consistent with research and theory, and which takes in a full range of basic skills. Even reading development seems a plausible area for this reconception of grammar, given the many points of similarity between syntactic maturity (Hunt, 1964; O'Hare, 1973) and the basis for determining readability levels of written materials (Fry, 1968). Chapter V describes how many of the positive approaches and notions described up to this point may be integrated and presented to teachers as a stimulus to their reconstructing their grammar curricula. The assessment of available textbooks and other resources shows that such a reconstruction is warranted and begins to indicate directions such a reconstruction might take.
CHAPTER V
A NEW SYNTHESIS:
PRINCIPLES AND OPERATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

To restate an underlying assumption of this dissertation, the great variety of basic skills that are implied in teachers' and parents' use of the term grammar provide, along with other forces and mistaken assumptions, sufficient reason to expect that something called grammar will continue to be taught in the schools. Since there is such a strong and extensive case against formal grammar, the system of abstract linguistic terms and rules describing word and sentence structure, English teachers ought to have an alternative to formal grammar, a synthesis of approaches rooted in the relationship between thought and language, and consistent with findings of research on grammar teaching and language development. The previous four chapters have sought to establish the multifaceted case against formal grammar and the roots for a new synthesis. Developed from these roots, the proposal for a reconceived grammar may be described in seven principles. In the synthesis of approaches to be proposed, these principles would operate simultaneously; however, each will be discussed separately, with reasons for each, proposed operational implications, and summaries of teachers' reports from their classroom implementation trials.
of these seven principles. (Teachers who conducted these trials had taken part in one of three sessions of my 3-credit graduate in-service course, "Begone Dull Grammar!" --offered in summer 1974, spring 1975, and summer 1976. Responses are reported from an anonymous questionnaire, distributed in April 1977, with 64%--35 of 55--questionnaires being returned. Because five were returned blank from people who were no longer teaching English, the responses indicated throughout this chapter represent a 60% return, or 30 of 50 teachers who still are teaching English. A copy of the in-service course syllabus, the implementation questionnaire, and cover letter are included in the appendix.)

The seven basic principles:

1. The sentence is the basic unit of study and production in grammar teaching.

2. Meaning which either conveys or stimulates student thinking characterizes as many sentences as possible in students' study and production of sentences.

3. In order to understand the dynamics of sentence structure in ways that may affect their own use of language, students produce and also question, combine, manipulate, and revise their own sentences.

4. Students produce sentences using three separate yet sequential stages: first, composing; second, manipulating and revising for effectiveness (rhetoric and logic); third, correcting for spelling, punctuation,
capitalization, and usage (the application of editing skills, often what is meant by the term grammar).

5. Students' production and study of sentence compositions allow for direct and functional connection to other language arts work, thus helping reintegrate the too often fragmented English curriculum.

6. The transfer value inherent in developing students' ability to "say a lot in a little" may be aided by both assignments and advice which point to practical uses of sentences work.

7. If teachers do not entirely dispense with the abstract method of sentence analysis involved in teaching parts of speech, then this instruction is limited in time and scope, and done in combination with activities allowing for secondary learning, creativity, meaning, and fun.

Reasons, Implications, and Preliminary Trials

The sentence as basic unit. The basic unit proposed for study and production in grammar teaching is the sentence. Rather than the narrower focus which much of grammar study gives to isolated words, phrases, abstract terminology, rules, and single objectives such as correctness, the focus on the sentence should allow a greater variety of interesting objectives and approaches to become part of grammar teaching.
The sentence is broad enough to allow work to be done with a wide range of traditional basic skill objectives, including punctuation, spelling, capitalization, vocabulary, usage, syntax, semantics, rhetoric, and logic--yet to do so in contexts allowing both interaction of these objectives and connection to less traditional aims. Work with the single sentence is narrow enough to be recognizable as grammar, and to be distinguishable from "composition," as it is usually conceived. Work with the sentence meets the dual tests of providing something that can be called grammar, a political necessity for many teachers, and answering the need for a grammar broad enough to reinstate truly traditional grammar objectives, including considerations of meaning, the effectiveness of word choice, features of style, and the criticism of ideas put forth in literature.

An even more essential reason to delineate the sentence, not isolated words or terms, as the "universe" which grammar explores comes from the nature of thought and language discussed in Chapter III. Sentence meanings--statements of thought, feeling, or intent--are at the basis of all language use. Language acquisition research indicates this is so, even in the first words of infants (cf. Katz and Fodor, 1963; McNeill, 1966, p. 115). Vygotsky also contrasts the external aspects of speech, which develop from word to sentence, to the semantic development which progresses from sentence to word. He reasons that the undifferentiated whole of semantic
thought units precedes word meanings and utterance of syntactic sentences in the adult as well (1962, pp. 126, 148-150). Thus the analysis of superficial syntactic structure into words, word endings, and formal characteristics limits and often distorts our understanding of the nature of language and communication. Both the message and motive in communication are ignored when study focuses on words and phrases out of their sentence and thought contexts. As Vygotsky pointed out, analysis of language beyond whole units produces elements which limit and sometimes distort our understanding of essential properties of the whole, much like the confusion that might arise if in order to understand how water extinguished fire we would analyze the water molecule, finding hydrogen, which burns, and oxygen, which sustains fire (cf. Vygotsky, 1962, pp. 3-4). The abstraction of form from meaning produces this kind of disoriented understanding.

The basic implication of the principle of making the sentence the basic unit of grammar teaching is that teachers must seek means to compensate for the over-emphasis on words and phrases taken out of context in their grammar texts, particularly in the chapters dealing with parts of speech. The research findings reviewed in Chapter III indicate that students at any age are competent both to understand and to generate a great variety and virtually infinite number of sentences (cf. Ervin-Tripp and Slobin, 1966; Bruner, et al.,
1966, p. 36; and Moore, 1973, p. 170 ff.). Therefore, the larger task for teachers is to find the kinds of sentence examples, study techniques, and sentence composing assignments which clarify worthwhile understandings, allow for student interest, and develop language abilities which students haven't already mastered, rather than to continue using means which only classify competencies students already have. Directions teachers may take in accomplishing these larger tasks are designated in the discussion of the principles which follow.

In view of the fact that 73% of the teachers who took the "Begone Dull Grammar!" course indicated that they now use whole sentences as the basic unit in their grammar teaching, and that less than 7% indicated they do so only "a little" (the other 20% indicating a "somewhat" position), it may reasonably be asserted that it is possible to get teachers of grammar to work primarily with the sentence. The contrast of this finding to the relative lack of concentration on the sentence in grammar textbook chapters and exercises, represents one particular instance of how formal grammar teaching may be changed.

Sentences with pointed meaning. In making grammar teaching more consistent with the relationship between thought and language, merely shifting the focus from isolated words and phrases to the whole sentence is not enough. Unless the trait of pointless content in the sentences
contained in grammar textbooks can be reversed, little else can be accomplished. Although saying so may seem circular in logic, it makes a certain sense to remark that you cannot make work with sentences meaningful until you fill the sentences with meaning. The factor which may bear the greatest single responsibility for the dullness many find in grammar is that the sentences which are studied have none of the characteristics of actual discourse—no implicit sender or receiver, no worthwhile message, and no purpose to bind these elements together.

Teachers in the "Begone Dull Grammar!" course have seemed to sense quite easily how much is missing from the sentences in grammar textbooks when they have selected sample sentences from their texts and compared them with actual discourse sentences. Table 1 shows a representative selection of sentences taken from the six textbook series assessed in Chapter IV, while Table 2 shows types of one sentence compositions.
TABLE 1 - SAMPLE SENTENCES FROM SCHOOL GRAMMAR TEXTS

*Bob threw the ball over the house.
*Judy wrote to her mother.
*The tiny kitten hissed at the big dog.
*You are not on the team.
*The carpenter's price sounded reasonable.
*I like none of these hats.
*The veteran with all his medals was honored by the town.
*Anthony has never visited Louisiana.
*How did you get my address?
*Martha found three nickels in the garden.
*Donald ate the last one.
*Commencement at Dover High is a simple ceremony.
*There are still nine more days left until Halloween.
*Roy cleaned and polished his shoes and put them away.

TABLE 2 - ONE SENTENCE COMPOSITIONS

*You reap what you sow.
*I have the choice of being right or being human.
*Nothing makes it easier to resist temptation than a proper bringing-up, a sound set of values--and witnesses.
*All great truths begin as blasphemies.
*A watched pot never boils.
*Half a loaf is better than none.
*A small hole can sink a large ship.
*If you want to make an omelet, you have to break some eggs.
*There was a faith healer of Deal
  Who said, "Although pain is not real,
  When I sit on a pin
  And it punctures my skin,
  I dislike what I fancy I feel."

*The limerick is furtive and mean;
  You must keep her in close quarantine,
  Or she sneaks to the slums
  And promptly becomes
  Disorderly, drunk, and obscene.

*For a lovely bowl
  let us arrange these flowers
  since there is no rice.

* Widow's Lament
  It's not quite cold enough
  to go borrow some firewood
  from the neighbors.

*He not busy being born is busy dying.

*Letting people in is largely a matter of not expending
  the energy to keep them out.

Reinstituting the meaning element promises to make work with
sentences more interesting and to counteract much of the
inherent boredom of grammar. The presence of pointed con-
ten meaning also provides a better basis for understanding
language, including its structural features, because the
rhetorical and logical elements which determine both struc-
ture and usage in actual discourse become relevant considera-
tions.¹

¹Vygotsky (1962, p. 146) and Pooley (1974) support this
assertion of the influence of rhetorical and logical elements
on syntactic structure and usage, respectively. Pooley
states that "factors governing communication in each specific
instance set the standards of correctness to that communica-
tion," and that correct usage "must be determined by the
Logic influences syntax because stating examples, qualifications, and implications of any one sentence will modify the syntax of the sentence, usually by adding or embedding subordinate structures. Rhetoric governs usage because word choice is largely determined by the intended effects and judgments about the listener or reader, and by the speaker's or writer's attitude toward the subject of communication. A-rhetorical grammars distort the nature of language and the function of syntactic structures when their sentences don't connect ideas, describe events, or assert opinions that a reasonable person could presume someone might care about, and when these sentences reflect no writer's efforts to say something effectively, to ascertain a degree of "truth," and to be capable of stimulating either assenting or dissenting responses— for these are the hallmarks of actual language use. In The Teaching of English Usage (1974), Robert C. Pooley comments that "it is a peculiar fallacy of language teaching in American schools and colleges that in teaching the use of language enormous needs of communication in every situation in which language is used" (pp. 26, 28).

Throughout this chapter, logic and rhetoric are used in their general senses, logic denoting factors influencing the sound reasoning of statements and their possible implications, and rhetoric denoting the artful use of language to achieve intended effects. Thus the questions how correct, how reasonable, and how effective a statement is point in turn to the domains of grammar and usage, logic, and rhetoric.
stress is laid on the language itself, which is only the medium, to the great neglect of the material to be communicated, which after all is the essential part of the communication" (pp. 24-25).

The advantages of pointed meaning were not always missing from the scholastic tradition of grammar, discussed in Chapter II. From the beginnings of the tradition it was disputed whether grammar should be limited to a purely structural treatment of language or whether to include considerations of meaning (cf. Michael, 1970, p. 25 ff.). It was only with the grammar of the eighteenth century that a purely structural approach won out, even though historically this was a revisionist rather than a traditional position on the nature of grammar. Leonard (1929), Applebee (1974), and Pooley (1974) all agree that the reasons the prescriptive and structural approach became dominant had to do with eighteenth-century grammarians' concerns about the corruption of English, due to several centuries of borrowing and inventing words, to a false philosophy of language, and to false analogies drawn between Latin and English. Thus it will put grammar back into the traditional mold that it had for nineteen centuries, prior to the last two centuries, to reinstitute meaning--and with it, considerations of effectiveness (rhetoric) and sound reasoning (logic)--in the content of language examples studied and produced. Teachers misunderstand the actual tradition of grammar. Thus, if
department heads, administrators, and others press for the teaching of a grammar that is traditional, then the reconceived grammar described in this chapter may have the important advantage of being able to assert that it is actually more traditional than the so-called "traditional grammar" embodied in textbooks.

The principle of using whole discourse sentences, those with pointed thought content such as the ones previously illustrated in Table 2, means that teachers must find sources for such single sentences and for composing assignments, and then must substitute these types of meaningful sentences for the "dummy" sentences and exercises in their textbooks. Once teachers begin searching they can find abundant sources for such authentic discourse sentences and possible assignments. Familiarizing English teachers with forms and examples of sentences with pointed meaning comprises a major component of the in-service course, "Begone Dull Grammar!" The section below describes the nature and uses for sentences in each of five groupings used to introduce these types of sentences to teachers in the in-service course. An annotated list of resources for locating examples of each sentence type is included in the appendix.

Grouping 1 -- signs, captions, telegrams, insults, graffiti, and bumper stickers--includes largely non-academic uses of language in very compressed styles, often limited to words and phrases, rather than complete sentence statements.
This grouping has characteristics that match early developmental stages in the acquisition of language, in which the child manipulates words and phrases prior to generating and manipulating whole sentences. It is probably not necessary to have secondary level students spend much time working in this grouping, though some such work might both be fun and provide an effective remedy for students who show an overly wordy style. The rest of the groupings also can provide emphases to remedy either too "choppy" or "wordy" a style. Therefore, this grouping is particularly recommended for elementary and early junior high students.

Examples of signs may be collected from environmental sources, thus providing purpose to close observation of the kinds and purposes of words in students' surroundings. Likewise, sayings from badges, buttons, and bumper stickers may be both collected and composed. Labelling objects and making signs for basic safety and classroom rules in kindergarten and primary classrooms can be another activity for students in grades three to six, as well as other pre-reading and cross-age tutoring activities. For older students, Composition for Personal Growth (Hawley, et al., 1973) has a number of activities that can supply personal awareness and values statements for signs, badges, buttons, and bumper stickers. Captioning photographs, graphs, charts, maps, drawings, and cartoons all require the use of concise statements either to amuse or to convey information. Telegrams
give students practice in combining and compressing sentences, eliminating all but the most essential words, and may also be related to writing titles and headlines. Insults and graffiti can be used for literary characters and situations, as well as discussed with a human relations focus to emphasize how words can hurt feelings and increase anger or even violence. Overall, students can compose, manipulate, and look closely at many words, phrases, and sentences that are at a relatively easy reading level by doing assignments in Grouping 1. All of these forms retain the elements of meaning, intent, and tone which characterize actual discourse, and thus provide a more fitting avenue for focusing on words and phrases than do grammar textbooks. The appendix includes an annotated list of books containing numerous examples of each kind of sentence or word use in this and also the next four groupings.

Grouping 2 -- thought cards, discussion summaries, and single sentence generalizations--as well as the next grouping, includes forms for single sentence composition assignments. Thought cards may be any observation, epigram, problem, statement, poem, or other notation that a student turns in on a 4"x6" or smaller card. Hawley, et al. (1973, pp. 159-160) suggest a procedure for using these in class. Limiting the card to one sentence encourages the effort to say a lot in a little, giving motive to writing and punctuating complex sentences in the process. As an example, a
thought card statement written by Mrs. Gail Dufault, a teacher in the spring 1975 "Begone Dull Grammar!" course, says: "To take the time to really listen to another person no matter how busy you are is one of the most precious rewards of being human." Thought cards may also be focused on the student's response to specific reading or another class assignment. Thus a student might write, "I don't think Huck Finn will really go to Hell for doing for someone else what he would want someone to do for him, because this is what the Bible says we should do."

Discussion summaries provide a one sentence writing assignment that encourages even the most passive listeners to respond to class and small group discussion. In small group discussion these individual summary statements may also measure the degree of consensus, as well as give the teacher an idea of what students conclude from the discussion. For discussion to help students support or modify their initial opinions on a topic, then students could write before-and-after sentence statements on the discussion topic. Also, having students invent statements either for classmates or for literary characters can emphasize the possible range of opinions and the connection between personal viewpoints and one's experience and perspective.

Single sentence generalizations are explicitly stated thoughts, usually cast in the present tense, which affirm a proposition. Students may either write them or draw them
from reading. An example of the latter type, from Saint Exupery's *Wind, Sand, and Stars*: "The machine does not isolate man from the great problems of nature but plunges him more deeply into them" (in Belcher, 1973, p. 318).

Another example is a statement by Thomas Merton: "Violence is essentially wordless, and it can begin only where thought and rational communication have broken down" (in Belcher, p. 179).

These forms all lead quite easily to logical testing through discussion and writing, as well as to examining alternative ways of ordering words, punctuating, and constructing sentences. Because they emphasize hypothetical and deductive thinking, they probably are not appropriate until after students reach the stage of formal operations (age 11 or 12), for reasons discussed by Piaget (cf. 1950, pp. 149-150). After this time, these kinds of sentences may do much to develop students' logical and linguistic capacity for making thoughtful statements.

Grouping 3 -- self-concept statements, human relations exercise statements, and learning feedback sentences--derives from the humanistic education movement and provides many one sentence composition assignments. The few sources listed in the appendix do too little to indicate the tremendous range of applications from humanistic education to the type of sentence work in this grouping. Some teachers who initially perceive these activities as too threatening, in
terms of self-disclosure that is called for, find that they can accept them as exercises for students to probe the self-concepts and values of literary characters and thus indirectly deal with these concerns as they apply to students.

The learning feedback sentences are the most easily adapted type of sentence in this grouping and actually consist of given sentence stems which students complete to indicate aspects of what they learn, either about themselves or about some aspect of what they are studying. Sentence forms in this group use the sentence beginning, to be completed by students, as a standard device. Their usefulness as a tool for self-awareness and personal growth expands when these forms are combined with sentence expansion and revision strategies discussed in explaining the next two principles. What makes these kinds of activities justifiable as grammar is that they are limited to single sentences and can involve the kinds of syntactic manipulation that grammar research (particularly Mellon, 1971 and O'Hare, 1973) has shown results in improving students' ability to use more mature syntax.

[^3]"More mature syntax" means simply syntax that is characteristic of more chronologically mature students and writers. Studies by Hunt (1964) and others indicate that the most reliable measure of this maturity is the increasing length of the writer's average "T-unit," which consists of the main clause of a sentence, plus all subordinate elements. This measure was found to be a reliable and consistent feature of development.
Even more importantly, the use of personal awareness sentence work provides the means for linking grammar to the deep motives which give rise to language. It was a major contribution of Vygotsky (1962) to see that motivation was an inseparable part of the thought-language unity, even the very source that underlies thought and language (pp. 150-152). Eric Erikson (1950, 1963), in his conception of the universal stages of psychosocial development, and Robert J. Havighurst (cf. 1953, pp. 9-15 and 1972, pp. 43-82) give us the basis to understand how much the intrinsic developmental tasks of adolescents concern clarifying a sense of identity and learning to relate more effectively to others. Thus if sentence work can become a tool for helping students achieve these developmental objectives, the motives that are deepest in and most appropriate to students in secondary schools, then it can make a new conception of grammar far more relevant to students' needs than any current conception of grammar.

If teachers are to be induced to have the content of their students' sentence work touch the motivational interests and concerns of students, it should be done with several safeguards and possible pitfalls in mind. For one thing, no teacher needs to regard every individual concern and form of self-expression as acceptable in the classroom. There is not in the procedures recommended in this dissertation any greater likelihood for problems such as swearing or
discussing drugs or sex than there is in the normal classroom, provided that limitations are clearly identified and, possibly, explanations are given based on teacher preference, taste, or school policy. More of a critical barrier to using personal concerns as content for sentence work is the argument advanced by some that emotional concerns of students are a veritable Pandora's box, and that a teacher is qualified neither to delve into students' psyches nor to repair damage that may be done. Such fears can justify a sterile and antiseptic curriculum, yet these fears need to be taken seriously. Caution is advisable in sequencing self-concept and human relations activities so that the degree of probable threat is controlled. Also, students should always be given the option to "pass" or select an alternative activity. But both the nature of language and the developmental needs of adolescents suggest that no honest view of language can be taught without accounting for the level of motivation, and that the motivations of students are going to mean they are concerned with personal identity and interpersonal connectedness whether the curriculum provides for recognition of this or not. Work with these concerns using sentences can provide a tool for objectifying and raising the level of awareness of personal and interpersonal issues. Not all teachers are interested or able to work in these personal content areas. But compassion and thoughtful planning are the prerequisites, rather than psychological
training and counselors' credentials. The use of personal concerns is only one of a number of possible dimensions to make work with the sentence more interesting and effective. But it is a direct means for relating thought and meaning to the deeper level of motivation. It also allows syntactic manipulation to be used to expand and refine self awareness.

Consider, for instance, what sentence expansion and manipulation can add to self-awareness activities. In working with the completion of sentence stems about identity issues (as in Canfield and Wells, 1976, pp. 211-213) a student might choose the stem "I don't want to . . ." and complete it by writing: "I don't want to ask a girl out for a date." Subsequent work with sentence expansion, perhaps using a checklist of connecting structures (see Table 3 later in this chapter), might result in something like the following: "I don't want to ask a girl out for a date because I'm not sure what to say and I'd be embarrassed if I sounded stupid or asked her in a way that would make her want to say 'no.'" This latter sentence is more mature because it gives reasons in support of a statement. One might also say it is psychologically more mature, since it points toward both the cause of an immature response and an avenue to move beyond that response, perhaps by writing and discussing one sentence statements appropriate to the situation. This complementary expansion of syntax and awareness could be demonstrated in many other examples.
Grouping 4 -- limericks, haiku, and other short poetry forms--provides both examples and writing assignments to help students work carefully with the many aspects of language contained in sentences which mirror the features of authentic communication--speaker, listener, and message, bound by a purpose. The means for linking grammar and poetry will be discussed further in the section on the fifth principle. A number of poetry anthologies contain one sentence poems, mostly long sentences with high verbal and transformational density. The same sentence manipulation strategies that can aid understanding of the flexible possibilities for syntactic arrangement may also be used to transform these one sentence poems into a series of short sentences or telegraphic phrase notes, which then students can put back together in different ways, noticing by comparison the syntactic choices made by the poet. Also, epigrammatic lines and sentences containing particularly pleasing images and language may be used for single sentence study and response, as "I'd rather learn from one bird how to sing than teach ten thousand stars how not to dance," from E. E. Cummings' 100 Selected Poems (1926, p. 66). A number of poems may be easily converted into sentence composition assignments by using just the introductory phrases of main clauses, and having students try to complete these in different ways.

A further feature of work with one sentence poetry is
the element of vocabulary, since many poems will use words that some students don't know. The fact that such vocabulary work may be done with short poems means that the meaning of a word may be related to the context of the whole sentence, many times showing how diction affects tone and thought. Teachers might want to use a thesaurus or a dictionary to have students learn both antonyms and synonyms for key words, since differences are a more primary and easily comprehended form of conceptualization than likenesses, an important finding of Vygotsky (1962, p. 88). Other work with vocabulary and semantic development could utilize brief lists of words that have the same root as a key difficult word in a poem or other sentence statement. *Words Come In Families* (Horowitz, 1977) is a recent resource for teachers to use in this regard.

**Grouping 5** -- proverbs, epigrams, and pensées -- expresses thought and ideas, either implicitly or explicitly. These are literary forms corresponding to the more informal one sentence idea forms noted in Group 2. Proverbs are pithy folk sayings, usually based on metaphor, or as Cervantes put it, "a proverb is a short sentence based on long experience" (Bartlett, 1968). Students can supply examples of proverbs, since they are a part of the oral literature passed down from generation to generation. A small group can read proverbs aloud and talk about each one extensively enough to explore its meaning, implications, and
degree of truth. This amounts to testing each to find evidence in logic and experience that would support or refute it. Contradictory proverbs are particularly good for challenging students to qualify these metaphorical generalizations. For instance, most students know both "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread," and "He who hesitates is lost." Examples could show circumstances in which each would be the better advice. In having students compose proverbs, it may be best to work in two stages, first trying to state a general truth non-metaphorically, then trying to compare it to another kind of experience (suggested in Moffett and Wagner, 1976, p. 376).

Epigrams are pointed remarks or observations characterized by wit and brevity. Sometimes they are memorable definitions, as: "White is calling Africa the Dark Continent" (Preston Wilcox, in Moffett and Wagner, p. 377), or "A cynic is someone who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing" (George Santayana, in Ward, 1973, p. 6). Other times they are simply witty or wise sayings, as Socrates' statement" "the unexamined life is not worth living," or Martin Luther King's "I want to be the white man's brother, not his brother-in-law" (both in Ward, pp. 44-45). Writing epigrams is appropriate for older students. It is a good means for showing that fewer words, well chosen, may make a statement particularly forceful, thus motivating work with reducing and compressing language for greater effect. This
may be done with single sentence generalizations and with the opening and closing lines of essays. In fact, epigrams provide students with an exceptionally good range of choices for writing topics. Their examples of word economy and wit at the one sentence level offer evidence of the artful unity of grammar and rhetoric.

Pensees express reflective insights, often stating a principle of conduct or philosophical outlook. They are similar to epigrams in content, but their style is reflective rather than witty. Collecting and writing such statements, perhaps in a journal of "personal truths," can provide work with the sentences that induces mature insights. Several examples of pensees may indicate this: "One is ordinarily more convinced of something by reasons he has found himself than by those that other people have thought up" (Pascal, 1958, p. 72); "Fear is often an indication that I am avoiding myself" (Prather, 1970, p. 31); "A friend is one who knows you as you are, understands where you've been, accepts who you've become--and still, gently invites you to grow" (author and source unknown). The impact of pensees, like many other one sentence forms, may be enhanced by revealing them gradually, a phrase at a time, while students try completing the next phrase, so that the writer's "truth" reverberates against students' own insights about the same topic. This method also gives concrete evidence of the flexibility of syntax and thought--how different statements,
equally valid, may be expressed in different ways with different effects.

As initially stated in this section, once a teacher begins looking, numerous examples of sentences with pointed meanings can be found. In the "Begone Dull Grammar!" course, teachers are given several pages of examples of each grouping and free copies of booklets containing limericks, haiku, and epigrams, supplied by Houghton Mifflin (Moffett, 1973). Significantly, the analysis of these teachers' grammar textbooks, by both them and myself, could not locate even a single example of a sentence that was a whole discourse with a pointed meaning. In view of this, exposure to these forms of one sentence discourse must be interpreted as having had a substantial impact on teachers in the in-service course. All but one reported in their replies to the implementation questionnaire that they altered their grammar teaching in order to use sentences with pointed meaning. 20% said they sought to have meaning characterize the sentences they used "somewhat," 50% said "mostly," and 27% indicated "always." Considering the contrast of the sentences in grammar textbooks with the kinds of sentences which these teachers reported using, these figures indicate the possibility of a substantial change in these teachers' grammar instruction.

Producing and manipulating sentences. Reinstituting the element of meaning in the sentences that students work
with in grammar study may be an important step, but it is not the only improvement proposed for grammar teaching. The third principle in this reconception of grammar is that in order to understand the dynamics of sentence structure in ways that can affect their own use of language, students produce and also question, combine, discuss, manipulate, and revise their own sentences. It is not simply the nature of the sentences, but also the method of analysis that has been a likely cause of the widely documented ineffectiveness of formal grammar teaching. So long as any grammar system treats sentences as static elements to be analyzed or written in fixed word order patterns by students, both the understanding and the nature of language will be distorted.

A key feature of syntax in relation to the thought content of a sentence is that syntax is flexible. One structure or pattern may be substituted for another, just as different words may express the same idea. Very often the best means for clearing up an awkward or confusing part of a sentence may be to say the idea in another way, resulting in alternative word choice and order; on the whole, grammar textbooks don't teach this indirect method of revision, but rather approach sentence weaknesses as errors to be corrected directly.

Moreover, it is not the effort to render or understand the form of a sentence that characterizes actual communication. Therefore it should be primarily the thought meaning
which a student is focusing on in production, manipulation, and revision. Piaget describes the concrete operations stage (age 7 or 8 to 11 or 12) as one in which students can manipulate image, feeling, and idea in language—but one in which syntax is not directly accessible to students' thought operations (1950, p. 153). Thus students in the third through sixth grades cannot be expected to profit much in their composition from being taught syntax or transformation rules. In any case, research studies by Mellon (1971) and O'Hare (1873) have shown that students gain in syntactic maturity solely as the result of doing exercises in combining several sentences into one longer, more complex sentence.

Yet the ability to use increased syntactic maturity well depends on intrinsic requirements of meaning, intent, audience, and communication situation. This is why syntactic manipulation needs to be merged with elements of pointed meaning and complete discourse if complex syntax is to be used well. An important part of understanding syntax is comprehending its function in relation to thought and expression. Thus manipulation of words and ideas for purposes that are primarily logical and rhetorical will necessitate an accompanying manipulation of syntax, while keeping syntax in the subsidiary role it occupies in actual language use.

Having students both produce and manipulate sentences is necessary if students are to understand syntax, according
to the implications of what Piaget has said about the active nature of knowing. "To know an object is to act on it," Piaget said. "To know is to modify, to transform the object" (1964, p. 176). This principle of active learning is further stated in To Understand Is To Invent (Piaget, 1973, pp. 98-99, in particular). Knowing as an active, manipulating, constructing action necessitates students' producing, transforming, and otherwise manipulating the structures of language that grammar teachers wish them to understand. Knowledge, like grammar, is not the placid noun we might like it to be; both are more accurately thought of as squirmy verbs.

While understanding and mastering sentence structure is one major aim of grammar teaching, the even larger aim as conceived by many English teachers is the correction of such errors as sentence fragments, run-on sentences, improper punctuation, and inappropriate usage. These aims also justify the reconception of grammar teaching so as to give students an active role in producing and manipulating sentences. Theoretical grammar consisting of abstract terminology and rules has not adequately affected the aim of error correction, perhaps because students make most of their errors in performance, not in their actual knowledge and ability, a conclusion drawn by many linguists, including Noam Chomsky (cf. 1965, pp. 3-4). It is the competence of the native speaker, who may be as young as four years old,
that formal grammar seeks to describe—though it does so inadequately, as Chomsky has pointed out (1968, p. 23 ff.). In terms of error correction, having students produce sentences means that errors which students actually make can become the targets of correction. The nature and causes of errors discussed in Chapter II indicate that many errors may be remedied without "instruction," by having students give a closer look at their writing, perhaps aided by a partner's or small group's response. The brevity of single sentence compositions can encourage many students to spend much more time working on a single phrase or sentence than they would if it were part of a longer continuity. This applies to improving both sentence structure and correctness.

Many English teachers believe that students should increase the quantity of their writing practice, but this need has nearly always been translated into a nightmare of correcting a constant flow of student themes, not a workable feature for any appreciable length of time. Working within the limited boundary of one sentence means that dealing with students' performance problems in language may be reduced to manageable bounds for both teachers and students. Because of the shorter time necessary to give close attention to a single sentence, both students and teachers can be persuaded to suggest amendments, revise a statement, and write out corrections, all far more direct means for correcting a draft than the abbreviated notations that most teachers use.
Operational implications of syntactic manipulation. It is simple enough to have students write single sentences, using the types of sentences discussed earlier in this chapter. The implications of having students manipulate their sentences needs exploration in order to find means that are direct and natural. It is not direct and natural to give primary attention to sentence structure, let alone to do so by means of an abstract taxonomy. Instead, by giving primary attention to the meaning and "sound" elements of a sentence, teachers and students can have it both ways; that is, making changes in what sentences say will also change the sentence structure. Then the advantages or disadvantages of particular structural changes may be appreciated for their contribution to the meaning, clarity, and effect of the sentence. The most useful means for sentence manipulating involve both systematic and open-ended approaches.

For instance, focusing on the meaning of a sentence may be done through systematic questions about content, with answers then leading to amending or revising a word, phrase, or clause. "Does it sound right?" and "Is it clear?" are two general questions that can be applied to the whole sentence. Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? and What was it like? are all applicable to specific parts of a sentence, with answers suggesting logical expansion and revision. Purpose and effect have a primary role. Again, the brevity of one sentence composition helps motivate close attention
to content and form, to options and to choices.

Combining several sentences written on aspects of the same topic or question, resulting in one longer sentence, is the underlying strategy of the transformational sentence-combining programs that stimulated acceleration of students' syntactic maturity. The principles of this strategy may be used with students' compositions of sentences with pointed meaning. Because Mellon, O'Hare and others have had students use given base sentences that were a-rhetorical and without a complete context, their means for sentence combining were both restricted and somewhat arbitrary. As a stimulus for having students both generate and expand or combine short sentences, teachers may want to distribute a chart of sentence connecting structures, accompanied by a diagram to indicate punctuation conventions (see Table 3).

The chart uses several terms from formal grammar. It should not be necessary to dispense with all grammar terminology. Rather one need not emphasize the importance of the terms nor presume they will be learned with much retention. Thus the chart in Table 3 uses several grammatical terms for types of connecting structures; the chart itself gives the actual examples of these categories, so that students can use the punctuation diagram without having to understand or retain definitions of abstract terms. A teacher experimenting with total abandonment of grammar terms may want to substitute such phrase as "type 1 connecting words."
main point, however, is to see the chart as one of several possible resources for use in expanding and revising pointedly meaningful sentences, with an emphasis on being able to say more within a sentence and to gain control over the increased complexity of punctuation in such longer sentences. That is why the use of terminology should be incidental and minimal.
TABLE 3 - CONNECTING STRUCTURES

A Chart For Use In Sentence Combining And Expanding

(Use these word lists and the punctuation diagram below to help get ideas for expanding and combining sentences. Notice that using the connecting words can help you make one sentence say a lot more.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The coordinating conjuncts</th>
<th>Conjunctive adverbs and phrases (a partial list)</th>
<th>Subordinating conjunctions (a partial list)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>and</td>
<td>furthermore, rather</td>
<td>when, although</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or</td>
<td>moreover, otherwise</td>
<td>whenever, though</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nor</td>
<td>in addition, at least</td>
<td>while, because</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for</td>
<td>besides, else</td>
<td>before, inasmuch as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>but</td>
<td>likewise, in the first</td>
<td>after, where</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yet</td>
<td>further, place</td>
<td>until, wherever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>so</td>
<td>however, secondly</td>
<td>as, as if</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nevertheless, consequently</td>
<td>since, as though</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>on the other, hence</td>
<td>if, so</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hand, in consequence</td>
<td>unless, so that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>on the contrary, therefore</td>
<td>provided in order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>instead, accordingly</td>
<td>that, that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>still, thus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>even so</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Punctuation Diagram

(This diagram summarizes the various positions of the coordinating conjunctions, conjunctive adverbs and phrases, and subordinating conjunctions—as well as the punctuation of sentences with these connecting structures. A single line means a sentence; a double line means an adverb clause. Parentheses indicate commas that may be optional.)

(1) ________, (,) coordinating conjunction___________.
    ________. Coordinating conjunction___________.

(2) ________, ; conjunctive adverb (,), _________________.
    ________________. Conjunctive adverb (,)___________.
    ________, ; ________, (,) conjunctive adverb (,)___________.
    ________. ; ________, (,) conjunctive adverb (,)___________.
    ________, ; ________, (,) conjunctive adverb (,)___________.

(3) ________, (,) subordinating conjunction___________.
    Subordinating conjunction___________.(,)___________.
The key to this strategy lies in the use of everyday language to get students to elaborate, qualify, and link together their statements of ideas that they care about, believe to be true, or think convey an insight that is worth stating. The same connecting structures that allow such sentence expansion are also useful for relating sentences within paragraphs in a longer theme. Besides finding how the connecting structures in Table 3 help them say more in a sentence, a little work with sentence combining also shows teachers and students that simple insertion of basic words or phrases, changing the endings of some words, and using internal punctuation are other sentence-combining devices.

While combining sentences tends to put the emphasis on the structure of the sentence, in many cases there may be greater interest and importance in questions about the relative truth of what the sentence says. One of the characteristics of sentences with pointed meanings is that they are open to disagreement because their ideas touch on matters in human experience that people care about, yet may see differently. Sometimes listing all the evidence and arguments both for and against the truth of a statement can be a productive form of discussion, ending perhaps in a revision of the initial sentence in order to account for the fullest possible range of evidence. Many statements written by students, using the one sentence composition forms suggested earlier, can become effective discussion topics. Sometimes
this discussion can be brief, just long enough to show the variety of opinion and supporting evidence that exists in the group at the moment; other times the discussion may go for most of a class, even leading into other investigation projects, including the writing of position papers. These possibilities begin to show some of the links to other English areas to be taken up later in this chapter. The clear relation of discussion to grammar comes through the impetus that more complex thinking gives to more complex syntax. Later, this complex thought may be expressed epigrammatically, with simpler syntax. Making such reduction is one form of revision suggested for more mature students.

The notion of having students manipulate the content and form of their sentences includes many of the strategies already discussed. Manipulation is worth considering separately as the most broad and open-ended strategy for students to use with sentence elements by adding, deleting, and rearranging the positions of words and phrases, substituting revised word choice, and even tinkering playfully with sound, structure, and sense, much in the manner that some poets suggest they do. Students are more likely to do this open-ended manipulation on their own once they have seen the increased logical and rhetorical impact of sentences that have been manipulated and revised through systematic questioning, combining, and discussing. Moreover, the limited length of one sentence composition suggests that the
motivation to manipulate sentences freely may develop without great delay. As an alternative, systematic means are available, and free-form manipulation may be just one of the options that the teacher occasionally demonstrates with sentences on the board or overhead projector.

Using a sentence either from a literary source or from student composition, the following strategy using open-ended manipulation and expansion is possible. First, the sentence is reduced to sparse telegraphic notes by omitting all but key nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Then students individually or in pairs try to recombine and elaborate these elements in different ways, keeping the basic ideas but not necessarily the same word order. It may be best not to let students see the original sentence before doing this; paraphrasing the main idea of the statement will probably encourage more flexible responses to the assignment. Finally, using the board or overhead projector (several students might do their sentence synthesis on transparencies), the class discusses and demonstrates both the variety of possible ways to develop the sentence and the particular way the writer constructed the statement.

Once students have generated optional ways of composing a sentence, a logical concluding step is to have them revise in a literal sense--to look again at the intended meaning of the sentence, the audience, the particular words, and to select or reconstruct the most effective statement they can
in light of these considerations. This is the true form of revision writers are apt to use. Although nearly every teacher is aware of what actual revision entails, too many are content to let students think they are revising when they copy over a piece of writing to make it neater and more correct, without any change in either substance or form. Reviewing and choosing among options, the essence of sentence revision, may also be stressed as a basic thinking process that applies to problem solving as well as writing. Work with one sentence composition allows this revision process to be practiced with maximum thoroughness yet minimum time and toil.

This is not to say, however, that work with the sentence as described in this chapter is being proposed as a complete composition program or as a substitute for longer writing assignments. Rather the sentence provides the limited scope to allow in-depth analysis and revision of elements in usage and style, using techniques that can be applied to longer compositions as well. Discussion of the fifth principle in this chapter further suggests a number of ways that a fuller composition program may grow out of and be related to work with the sentence. Nothing in this dissertation should be taken to suggest that students should do less writing than they currently do; on the contrary, it seems better to increase the quantity and variety of student writing with sentence work playing a supporting role.
As was noted in Chapter IV, the assessment of six grammar textbook series showed no examples of systematic manipulation of syntax, revising for greater effectiveness, or similar activities. Rather, sentences are treated as static elements. However more than 50% of the "Begone Dull Grammar!" course graduates returning an implementation questionnaire indicated that they had students manipulate and revise their sentences either most of or all the time. The actual percentages were 27% saying "always," 30% "mostly," 23% "sometimes," and 20% "a little." None of the teachers indicated they had never had students use sentence manipulating strategies, which had been the case when they took all their sentence work from the grammar textbooks.

Working with sentences in stages. The fourth principle in this proposed reconception of grammar teaching is that students produce sentences using three separate yet sequential stages: first, composing; second, manipulating and revising for effectiveness (rhetoric and logic); and third, editing for spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and usage (the aims of grammar instruction which many teachers cite). When originally faced with the proposal that the sentences in their grammar textbooks need to be replaced with others having more pointed and stimulating meaning, some English teachers have raised the objection that meaning may be a distraction from issues of structure and correctness, the usual aims of grammar. If meaning is indeed a distraction,
which perhaps should seem like a sadly laughable reflection on teachers' tolerance for meaninglessness in what they teach, then it is distracting only because the very nature of language and thought indicates that the content of communication, rather than the form, will be consciously perceived in most cases. Writing has a particular advantage over speech of allowing a thought, once expressed, to be reexamined and crafted for structural and editorial, as well as logical and rhetorical, effectiveness. Since the purpose of such revision is to make the thought clearer or more effectively expressed, it is simply common sense to have students work on the expression of ideas prior to manipulating structure and correcting transcriptive and usage errors. Again, the brevity of one sentence composition gives the advantage of allowing teachers and students to include all the stages of composition that many writers actually use, though sometimes writers depend on their editors to correct errors. In synthesis with operational suggestions made for the first three principles, error correction strategies go to the heart of what many English teachers hope to accomplish through grammar teaching. Following a brief review of the composing and revising stages, this section describes ways to deal with errors and inappropriate choices in students' use of language through means that are consistent with the findings of research on error correction that were reviewed in Chapter II.
The three stages proposed for production are sequential, yet there might be movement back and forth among them in actual practice, rather than an unaltering progression. Many writers, for instance, correct spelling and other areas and revise wording if they perceive some inadequacy in these during the process of composing. In many cases, too, correcting errors in first drafts of sentences may precede manipulating and revising the statements. Also, the process of revision may be aided by time afforded for incubation of ideas; therefore students might be asked to compose a number of sentences and return at another time to select several for manipulation and revision. Still, the order of the stages establishes a basic guiding principle for working with sentences, allowing some flexibility as noted.

The principle of using sentences with pointed meanings entailed a number of one sentence composition forms and assignments that are recommended for use in the first stage. Motivational factors—the needs, interests, and emotions of students—provide the most natural basis for generating a meaningful sentence in actual language use; so it should be in school sentence work. This is where altering the content of sentences in grammar can reconcile grammar study with humanistic education. Motivation through values clarification and the use of life adjustment concerns is particularly recommended for adolescents, though the possible initial threat of self-disclosure may be reduced through applying
these affective strategies vicariously and indirectly to literary characters in stories read and discussed in class. Composing sentences in the forms previously suggested also involves imagination, logic, and response to literature. As students read sentences in the same forms of authentic discourse as those they write, they may increase their appreciation of the writer's craft. Particularly when composing by using stems borrowed from short poems and other one sentence discourse forms, students have the actual text of a more experienced writer's solution to the assignment problem. This juxtaposition of producing and responding has powerful possibilities for increasing both taste and appreciation.

The second stage of work with sentences, manipulating and revising sentences in ways discussed in the previous section, reunites rhetoric, logic, and semantics with grammar at the same time that it allows use of sentence-combining methods that led to accelerated syntactic maturity in the studies of Mellon (1971) and O'Hare (1973). Flexible use of sentence manipulating strategies with whole discourse sentences further demonstrates that the purpose of working with syntax is to improve logical and rhetorical effectiveness. It is particularly appropriate to use means suggested in the previous section to have students add qualifying and subordinate elements to their sentence compositions. Although adolescents have had the linguistic tools for doing this
since early childhood, developmental psychologists assert that corresponding thought operations that allow full understanding of causality and conditionality mature only in adolescence (Piaget, 1950, pp. 145-146; Vygotsky, 1962, pp. 46-47; Bruner, et al., 1966, pp. 45-46).

A further implication of research reviewed in Chapter III applies to this manipulating and revising stage of one sentence composition. The contrast between the early maturation of syntax and the gradual growth of semantic development suggests the need to shift more attention to word and phrase manipulation for meaning and vocabulary growth. Attention to the meaning of words and to contrasting or similar vocabulary is thus a focus more appropriate than syntactic classification for the student's developmental needs in language. This is another case showing the need to shift the subject of grammatical analysis from form to content.

Editing for error correction and improvement of inappropriate choices is the third stage proposed in a sequence for working with sentence production. Basically this stage involves a brief time of proofreading, perhaps in small groups, with dictionaries available and instructions to look for and correct errors. A certain amount of separate instruction may benefit students' efficiency at this stage, though it would be inconsistent with research conclusions discussed in Chapter II to use formal grammar terms and
rules in such instruction. The nature of student errors and inappropriate choices does not correspond to the nature of formal grammatical analysis, but to problems of thought, meaning, egocentricity, and attention (Frogner, 1939; Butterfield, 1945; Harris, 1962; and Chomsky, 1965, pp. 3-4). The "thought and meaning" approaches which use everyday language have the greatest effect on reduction of errors, as indicated by these studies. Although these thought and meaning approaches are implicit in the means discussed in this chapter, several other techniques are recommended. Dictation and practice in punctuating unpunctuated passages, using portions of reading selections as well as one sentence compositions, is one suggested practice. Another is to have students do a project to identify non-standard usage forms in their own and their friends' speech, using some sort of linguistically sound and up-to-date checklist of non-standard forms, such as may be adapted from Pooley (1974), who also stresses the importance of making the main criterion of usage the assessment of the appropriateness of a word or phrase, in view of the communication situation and purposes (pp. 23-29). Instructing students in the basic types of spelling errors is a third recommendation, based on the "Do-It-Yourself-Spelling" materials developed for the Interaction program (Moffett, 1973). The basic fault with most teaching aimed at error correction and reduction is the use of a "shotgun" approach to the whole field of errors when students need a
"rifle" approach in order to zero in on their own particular difficulties.

"Trial-and-Error Notebooks" may also be used as an individualized tool in error reduction. Students would record errors and corresponding corrections from their sentence and other composition in this notebook, regularly getting together with a partner to take and give diagnostic tests that can show whether given errors are still being made. Personal and class "demon lists" may also be used, although some research would indicate that at least 50% of students' spelling errors are made on words they know how to spell correctly, and do so on tests (cited in Moffett and Wagner, 1976, p. 234). Overall, better assignment motivation, oral proofreading done alone and in groups, and the frequent practice that one sentence composition allows may be the most effective combination of means for reducing errors. For some students, there is greater ease in paying attention to "correctness" factors that the brevity of one sentence composition allows, and this can induce the editing work that they might not be willing to do on longer compositions.

A sensible approach to reforming grammar teaching would not take the focus entirely away from error correction, but rather put it in a context with composition and revision that reflects the actual role of editing in language and thought. The accurate and appropriate expression of
meaningful ideas is the context proposed for error correction.

In using the terms errors and inappropriate choices it is important to distinguish between mechanical mistakes in transcribing language, such as spelling and punctuation errors, and differences in dialect which may be inappropriate either for specific writing purposes and audiences or for school work generally. Particular sensitivity to the factors which cause dialect differences, speech characteristics in the home and community language use, may well help teachers encourage students to see what many English teachers have called "correct English" as an alternative dialect worth adding to whatever dialect the student already has. For instance, a black youngster may be encouraged to see the value in having both the street dialect, for situations in which standard English would be inappropriately foreign, and the standard dialect. Improvisation of situations such as various job and promotion interviews can highlight the contrasting effects of different dialects, and can lead to discussions of linguistic prejudice as well. Also literature featuring dialect can be studied to reinforce the appropriateness of various dialects in particular situations. The point is to honor the variables of appropriateness cited by linguists as truer values than "correctness," to try to motivate students to learn the dialect of books and most educated people, and to recognize that the student's own
dialect does not have to be replaced in order to learn standard dialect.

Since applying three stages to working with sentences is more time consuming than many other features of this proposed reconception of grammar teaching, it is not surprising that 17% of the "Begone Dull Grammar!" graduate teachers said they used these stages only "a little" and 30% indicated they did so "somewhat." Nevertheless, none of the teachers followed their former practice, when they relied on their grammar textbook, which allowed no work at all in using different stages in sentence work. 37% said they used stages "mostly," while 17% said "always." It is likely that giving teachers a chance to use these stages in the course, with a number of one sentence composition assignments, accounts for the degree to which this fourth principle was apparently implemented, despite the added time this reworking of sentences requires.

Connecting sentence work to other English areas. Students' production and study of sentence compositions allow for direct and functional connection to other language arts work, thus helping reintegrate the too often fragmented English curriculum. Many English teachers have wished to find a way to link grammar study to literature and other areas of the English curriculum. Although a few teachers may have attempted to have students imitate, diagram sentences, or identify parts of speech in passages from a
literary work, such attempts are likely to be frail or futile efforts to establish insightful connections between grammar and literature. The sentences of grammar texts are created or studied only for their surface features of syntax. Once the meaning of the sentence has characteristics of true discourse, however, the avenue is open to finding ways to relate that meaning to other areas being studied; also, the meaning may itself be drawn from these other areas of studies and used in sentence composition assignments. Students can use a variety of sentence forms to respond to or place themselves in their reading. Key sentences from reading may be used as examples, broken down into simpler base sentences or even isolated phrases, and then recombined in either the same or different ways. The options for relating sentences with pointed meanings to other language arts activities are so many, in fact, that a twenty-minute brainstorming session among small groups of teachers at the conclusion of my two-week "Begone Dull Grammar!" workshop in summer 1974 produced over one hundred examples of activities related to one sentence compositions. Their list of ideas may be found in the appendix. Assuming that having teachers think up such ideas themselves will increase the chance they will use them, I have had teachers in each course session brainstorm this kind of checklist of possible applications of sentence work to non-grammar areas of the curriculum.
Just as conventional grammar teaching does not include syntax that is as complex as a pre-school child's, so also students' sentences and those taken from actual discourse are in many cases too complex and transformationally dense to be submitted to the usual classification approaches of formal grammar. Since the proposed reconception of grammar teaching discussed in this chapter has many possible links to work beyond the sentence, this is an intrinsic advantage over a kind of grammar which cannot even adequately deal with the sentence itself. The possibility of connecting a new synthesis of approaches for sentence work to many different aspects of the English curriculum further allows this reconceived grammar to compensate for fragmentation in the curriculum. Sentence production and study may be a staple daily activity which prepares for, accompanies, and grows out of non-grammar work.

First, sentence expansion and combining accustoms students to the kinds of sentences characteristic of higher reading levels, which derive from measures based on increased length of sentences and words, and increased numbers of syllables per hundred words. Readability and T-unit measures are remarkably similar. Teaching grammar in a way that restricts study and practice to simple sentences and elementary vocabulary may actually retard the development of reading ability, just as the separation of form from content may hinder conceptual growth (cf. Lewis, 1963, p. 181). A
further link of sentence work to reading skills may come through having students look for and compose main idea statements and lead sentences for key portions of reading. Writing questions, the third type of sentence in the fabled "declarative, imperative, and interrogative" categories of traditional classification, can be a sentence producing and revising activity before reading, perhaps following a scanning of the text, or afterwards for discussion and clarification of confusing passages.

Secondly, the connecting structures (Table 3) useful for stimulating sentence expansion and combination may also be used to help students make smoother transitions within and among paragraphs. Work in organizing ideas and syntax in subordinate and superordinate positions can extend easily to the logical organization of paragraphs. Murray emphasizes the importance of leads in writing and suggests students should work with and delight in leads (1968, pp. 59-60). Such work provides a link between one sentence compositions and longer discourse. Similarly, the various positions of topic sentences within paragraphs and themes suggest ways to document and develop a piece of writing (cf. Murray, pp. 58-59); this shows how work with lead sentences and supporting details in note form may be a usable method of organizing writing, although such work is limited to those paragraphs that have a topic sentence. Contrary to what many grammar and composition textbooks state, not all paragraphs
have an explicit topic sentence. Students could nevertheless construct a sequence of lead sentences with outlined supporting detail as an early draft stage for preliminary feedback and suggestions from small groups, teacher, or both. A number of composed or selected one sentence discourse examples could be used as the title or clinching sentence for an essay. Epigrams are particularly good for this. A proverb can be used as the moral for a fable, the writing assignment being to create a fable appropriate for the selected proverb. Further, sentences that don't "sound right" or otherwise seem to need reworking can be used for a second stage manipulating and revising workshop, done either individually or in small groups. Looking for such sentences may be one particular focus of proofreading. All of these means may be used to ensure connections between grammar and writing, but only after grammar has been reconceived.

Drama is a third area to relate to a reconceived grammar. For improvisation and role playing, the writing and revising of one sentence minimal situations which state characters, conflict, and situation, can be a task utilizing grammar strategies proposed in this chapter. Students can write one sentence statements for character motivation and description, as well, to aid either acting or writing and interpreting scripts. Script writing provides a natural context in which to practice and learn to improve punctuation. Assuming a character voice in oral and written improvisation
may give students reason to attempt to use an expanded vocabulary or a more standard usage dialect, to match the character being impersonated. Work with improvisation cycles of playing, discussing, altering, and replaying a dramatic scene can reinforce the sentence revision process, as well as show the advantages of creative revision on a broader scale.

A fourth possible extension of grammar work is the connection to discussion topics. Many one sentence statements can provide good writing topics, if they have pointed meaning in them in the first place. In the same way, they can make excellent discussion starters. The basic discussion strategy might be to amend the statement to the point that a discussion group can reach consensus on its acceptability. One sentence summaries of "buzz group" short discussions may be an effective closure procedure both within groups and for class sharing. A quite different yet highly valuable kind of work with the sentence would focus on giving constructive feedback, statements on the process of discussion that are both tactfully and specifically worded to help improve discussion and deal with hang-ups in the group. Examples of such statements are given in Reaching Out (Johnson, 1972, pp. 41-64).

Literature study and response, involving poetry, short story, novel, and non-fiction, is the fifth area for applying work with the sentence to other aspects of English.
Poetry in particular can be the source for many examples of sentences with pointed meaning and effective word choice. Haiku and other short poems provide a direct link between poetry and work with whole discourse sentences. "Untangling" poetically compressed language can be a sentence analysis activity. Another grammar and poetry connection is shown in having students anticipate and compose completions for lines of a text as it is gradually revealed, line-by-line. Besides poetry, a number of other forms of literature may be used with one sentence production and study activities. Composing single sentence statements of character motivation, theme, conflict, or personal response to some aspect of the reading may be done with either open-ended or value and self-awareness stem sentence forms. Students may also be asked to pick out key sentences for tone, theme, character motivation or description, and other aspects of narrative. Parallel to the stages suggested earlier for sentence production, a three stage study sequence may be followed--first concentrating on basic meaning and the students' responses, secondly noting choices of phrasing and ways of connecting and emphasizing ideas and images, and thirdly noting features of punctuation, spelling, and any difficult or unusual vocabulary. Asking students to compose pre- and post-reading questions may also be a way to motivate and deepen comprehension. Methods of performing a text discussed by Moffett and Wagner (1976, pp. 105-121) get students to vocalize punctuation and
vocabulary, thus deepening these aspects of learning often associated with grammar.

These extensive yet hardly exhaustive examples show that teachers don't need to choose between teaching basic skills and teaching more stimulating aspects of English. Using grammar approaches that this chapter has described allows, even encourages, a fruitful blend of sentence work with other aspects of the curriculum. Forty-three percent of the teachers who learned this synthesis of reconceived grammar approaches indicated that they connect grammar with other areas of the English curriculum "mostly," while 10% said they did so "always." Seven percent said they never do this, another 7% reported doing it "a little," and 33% said they connect sentence work to other areas of the curriculum "sometimes." These figures stand in noteworthy contrast to the assessment of grammar textbooks in Chapter IV, which found no such interrelationships at all.

Aiding transfer value of sentence work. The transfer value inherent in developing students' ability to "say a lot in a little" may be aided by both assignments and advice which point to practical uses of sentence work. In addition to the other advantages of working with composition and comprehension within the boundaries of single sentences, one may easily envision communication situations where it would be a valuable skill to be able to express one's thoughts
effectively in a single statement. As another means to help students see what is worthwhile about their sentence work, it would be valuable to point out specific instances of how this skill might be applied. Below are some brief examples that can readily be converted to specific hypothetical situations for having students compose responses. Some of these may also be given as direct, real "action project" assignments. The ability to "say a lot in a little" can transfer to:

1. conversations, especially with adults and superiors when one isn't usually expected to say a great deal;
2. class discussions in various subjects, where the number of students and the teacher's style wouldn't allow a student to talk very much;
3. asking questions in or after class, to clarify assignments, unclear points, or ambiguous expectations;
4. answering test questions, particularly short essay test items;
5. use as a study technique, perhaps in question and answer format, to outline main conclusions from class and reading;
6. composing notes of appreciation or "strength recognition," showing encouragement and admiration for positive qualities and deeds of others, a valuable interpersonal skill;
7. and "psyching" oneself up, not out, through altering expressions which suggest powerlessness (can't, should, and negative self descriptions), instead emphasizing personal responsibility and resources. After students and teachers work for a while with the kinds of strategies and assignments suggested in this chapter, they should be able to add other possible instances of transfer. In looking back over the "Begone Dull Grammar!" course sessions, I saw that this principle received only brief emphasis. The implementation questionnaire filled out by course graduates indicated that the principle of showing the transfer value of "saying a lot in a little" was implemented less than any of the other six principles. Still, the rate of self-reported implementation of this principle was encouraging. Forty-three percent said they "mostly" showed transfer value through advice and assignments, 3% said "always," and 33% said "somewhat." Ten percent indicated "a little" and 10% "not at all" as the degree to which they implemented principle six. Thus while this was the lowest positive response from implementation trials, it still indicates a substantial change from reliance on textbooks and traditional assumptions. While these may credit formal grammar as having great transfer importance, they use virtually no assignments or other means to demonstrate such transfer, and nearly a century of research has not been able to document any transfer at all.
Concerning parts of speech. The teaching of parts of speech is one aspect of formal grammar that traditionally has been supported by claims that this gives students a vocabulary to understand usage rules, or that the parts of speech create a common vocabulary for teachers and students to talk about writing. There are several fallacies in this thinking, the main one being that such a rationale makes no mention at all of alternative means for teaching usage or discussing writing, that many teachers who teach parts of speech have students do very little writing to discuss anyway, that students have so much difficulty recalling and applying parts of speech terminology that the terms tend to be taught year after year, and that the research indicates absolutely no correlation between learning to identify parts of speech and any improvement, either in usage or writing. Research and reasoning notwithstanding, for some teachers there can be no grammar teaching without instruction in the parts of speech.

Both the assessment of textbooks in Chapter IV and a polling of teachers can show how emphasis on parts of speech can dominate an unreasonable portion of the curriculum. For instance, I asked forty Worcester (Massachusetts) teachers in a March 1977 workshop on individualizing instruction to write out what proportion of the teaching of English ought to be concentrated on the parts of speech, not including usage, for each of several grade level spans. The teachers responded: forty percent for grades 5-6, thirty-five percent for grades 7-9, and twenty percent for grades 10-12. These results are averaged ratings, and closely parallel pre-course responses of teachers in the "Begone Dull Grammar!" course.
Thus the seventh principle in this proposed reconcep-
tion of grammar is that teachers who choose to teach parts
of speech are to limit the time and scope of this instruc-
tion, and combine parts of speech work with activities that
allow for secondary learning, creativity, meaning, and—as
long as it is not the sole objective—fun. The reasons
behind this proposed principle are fairly straight-forward.
The amount of time spent on parts of speech by students'
prior and future teachers and textbooks can more than com-
pensate for limiting this instruction in one teacher's
classroom. Ten hours, spread over the year, seems a reason-
able time limit to try to maintain.

Several other practices may also improve the efficiency
of this instruction. For one thing, since over 93% of the
words in our language are either nouns, verbs, adjectives,
or adverbs (Conlin and Herman, 1967, p. 134), it would make
some sense to concentrate on these four major word classes.
Among the things revealed in research on the history of gram-
mar teaching is the fact that many conflicting arrangements
and total numbers of parts of speech have been proposed in
past grammar systems. Ian Michael documents fifty-six dif-
ferent systems which existed in the eighteenth century,
twenty-seven of which described only four parts of speech—

Another means to increase the efficiency of parts of
speech instruction is to give students more than one kind of
definition of the terms. Structural grammar defines parts of speech based on word endings or some other criteria of form; traditional grammar tends to define parts of speech according to what they do (naming, expressing action, describing, modifying, etc.); and perhaps the simplest form of definition is the brief test-frame sentence containing a blank space that makes use of the syntactic characteristics of parts of speech, whereby their use relative to other words in a sentence means that only one part of speech could fill the blank and sound right. The appendix includes a suggested handout using these three types of definitions.

It needs to be emphasized that in dealing with a particular sentence one may discuss ways to correct or improve the sentence by using everyday language, the words that either are or might be in the sentence, and without using a single grammatical term. Some teachers may prefer to do sentence expansion primarily in the verb phrase portion of the sentence, following the implications of the findings of Vygotsky regarding the tendency toward predication in inner speech, the basic level of verbal thought (1962, pp. 33 ff.). Also, asking students to tell who, why, where, when, and how, regarding specific aspects of a sentence, will get students to add corresponding grammatical elements, without any of the confusion that the use of grammatical terminology would be likely to introduce. Further, it may be made clear that the four major parts of speech can refer to phrases and
clauses, as well as to words. But rather than using grammatical terms such as phrase and clause which, in order to be understood, imply an understanding of a whole grammar system, teachers can more efficiently ask students to "give more information" with a word, several words, or a whole sentence. If telling when, how, or why--these elaborations will be adverbial. If the elaboration answers "What was it like?" this will be adjectival. "Who or what are you saying this about?" will yield nominals. And answers to questions such as "What did he (she or it) do?" will produce elaborations or corrections that show predicate functions. If the natural language questions accomplish the aims of an often confusing abstract nomenclature, isn't it more logical to use the easier and more efficient approach?

A recent publication called An Activity Approach to Basic English (Goba, Luciani, and Uchenick, 1976) provides probably the best materials and activities for teaching parts of speech and sentence patterns. The authors have to some extent "made an evening gown out of burlap," which is to say that although the design they produced shows skillful and creative work with formal grammar, they are nonetheless adding appeal to an essentially worthless body of material. They take formal grammar about as far as it can be taken toward becoming interesting, but still do not touch on many of the features of improved grammar teaching proposed in this chapter, nor do they meet the criteria implicit in Chapters
II and III.

Ninety-three percent of the teachers introduced to procedures and rationale presented in this dissertation said the degree to which they used this last principle was "somewhat," "mostly," or "always." This principle had the highest percentage, 37%, of implementation at the "always" level, with 30% of the teachers saying "mostly," 27% "somewhat," 7% "a little," and no teachers saying not at all. Considering the limited time given to teaching parts of speech in the course, less than 10% of the total, the rationale against formal grammar and class sharing of ideas for "spicing up" parts of speech teaching, such as classifying words as part of making specialized hobby and interest dictionaries, must have been effective. Along with making the sentence the basic unit of study and trying to use sentences with pointed content, this final principle was implemented most thoroughly, according to the teachers' self-reports.

Further Data and Summary From the Implementation Questionnaire

This dissertation has sought to develop a basis for changing what English teachers do in teaching grammar, particularly to develop means to have them replace formal grammar content and traditional teaching methods. The implementation
questionnaire results are tentative, in view of the limitations of self-report data, and, furthermore, no claim is made for rigorous empirical controls. Further investigations might increase the value of quantitative data in the areas dealt with in this dissertation, though criteria questions, interaction of variables, and other factors may limit the potential value of conceivable empirical studies. My effort was to conceive and ground in research and theory a synthesis of approaches that could be proposed to teachers who have to or want to teach grammar, in the face of extensive evidence that the available grammar textbooks and curricula continue to concentrate on discredited approaches. From 1974 to 1976 I proposed these approaches to over fifty teachers in a three credit in-service workshop course. The questionnaire which thirty of them completed and returned yield tentative results; yet the results are conclusive. Some of the following conclusions, in addition to those stated previously in this chapter, are warranted from the data summarized in the appendix.

Each of the seven principles proposed for reconceiving grammar was capable of being implemented either "somewhat," "mostly," or "always" by eighty percent or more of the teachers. Three principles--those for limiting the time and scope in teaching parts of speech, using the sentence rather than the parts of speech as the basis of grammar teaching, and using sentences with pointed content meaning--were all
implemented "somewhat," "mostly," or "always" by over 90% of the teachers. In contrast to this, not one of the grammar textbooks formerly relied on by these teachers could be considered to be consistent with any of the seven principles more than "a little," and in most cases the assessment indicated no degree of consistency in the least. These are specific indications of the possibility of changing English teachers' approaches to grammar teaching.

The need to spend extra time is a common factor among those of the seven principles which relatively greater proportions of teachers had difficulty implementing. Thus, having students manipulate, combine, question, and otherwise revise their sentences, having them use a three stage composition process, connecting grammar work with other English areas, and using assignments that show the transfer value were proposed guidelines that some teachers found difficult to implement—although never more than 20% of the teachers indicated implementing any of these principles only a little or not at all.

Some qualification may be necessary on the possible bias of the sample used: teachers who took a course titled "Be-gone Dull Grammar!" In the first place, one might speculate that teachers who would take any graduate course are more oriented toward improving their teaching and more likely to make curricular changes than the portion of grammar teachers who would not take such courses. Secondly, the title has a
built in appeal to teachers who may think of grammar teaching and learning as dull.\textsuperscript{5} Obviously, someone who thinks grammar study is interesting may not see a need to take such a course. However, the willingness to make improvements and the sense that grammar teaching needs improving are two attitudes that in a pragmatic sense may be necessary in order for a teacher to make changes in textbook approaches to grammar teaching.

Several additional items in the questionnaire indicated the degree of changes and barriers to those changes that the teachers perceived. Seventy-three percent of the teachers said they "mostly" replaced traditional grammar with the approaches introduced in the course, while 3\% said they did this always, 23\% sometimes, and no teachers indicated replacing traditional grammar either a little or not at all. Twenty-seven percent said they were somewhat satisfied with the changes they made, 50\% indicated they were mostly satisfied, and 23\% said they were always satisfied. Asked whether they felt they had developed an adequate replacement for dull and ineffective aspects of formal grammar, 7\% said

\footnote{On a ten-point scale, 1 meaning "very interesting" and 10 "very dull," forty Worcester English teachers previously referred to, who hadn't taken the course, gave a mean rating of 5.2, with over 70\% rating grammar as at least 5, or "half dull." A comparable rating in the beginning of the three course sessions indicated only a slightly higher mean rating (5.7), and a nearly equivalent percentage rated 5 or above--indicating that those taking "Begone Dull Grammar!" might have had no more than a normal degree of perception of grammar study as dull.}
they had in every case, 57% said they had done this "mostly," and 37% said "somewhat." No teachers indicated they had developed only a little or no replacement for dull and ineffective aspects of formal grammar. Thus the degree of change and the overall attitude toward those changes in formal grammar teaching, as perceived and reported by the "Begone Dull Grammar!" graduate teachers, show strong and definite support for the belief that grammar teachers can reform their curricula when shown reasons and means for doing so.

**Barriers to change.** In Chapter I we looked at several factors supporting the probability that there will be a continued demand for some kind of grammar teaching. Many teachers have cited the expectation that grammar will be taught as the main reason that they would continue to teach grammar. A critical question for any proposed replacement for formal grammar is thus whether it can satisfy the external expectation of administrators, other teachers, and parents. Thirty percent of the "Begone Dull Grammar!" graduates indicated the course's alternative approaches satisfied these expectations "always," while 50% said they did so "mostly," and 13% indicated they did "somewhat." Seven percent of the teachers said the alternative approaches satisfied external expectations "a little," and no teachers said this was not at all so. This is a significant finding, in view of the number of teachers in the course who had expressed
anticipation that lack of understanding or support from others would restrict their making changes in their grammar teaching. On a voting question at the end of the course roughly 50% of the teachers indicated that they anticipated being limited by such external expectations; in fact, slightly less than 20% reported having been restricted either somewhat or mostly.

A related surprise was the finding that 57% of the teachers reported encountering no barriers at all, 17% "a little," 23% "somewhat," and only 3% "mostly." Ten teachers listed specific barriers for the open-response question, "If you encountered barriers, what were they (list them below and/or on the back)?" Four cited lack of administrative support, understanding and interest. Four listed expectations of other teachers and local "back-to-basics" pressure. Four also said there wasn't sufficient time in their curriculum to accommodate many of the proposed changes. Two teachers cited "a small number" of students who complained they weren't being taught traditional grammar. And two teachers cited their own habits, conformity, and resistance to change as barriers. In view of the fact that one-third of the teachers indicated some specific barrier, the response still seemed encouraging when viewed in the light of the other responses indicating widespread implementation of and satisfaction with alternative approaches to grammar teaching.
CHAPTER VI
FINAL CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND QUESTIONS

I am more convinced than ever that it is not only desirable but also possible to change individual teachers' attitudes and practices toward formal grammar teaching. The work leading up to this dissertation has been confined to a small percentage of the English teachers in central Massachusetts schools. The means for influencing them have been channeled through a three credit course in which they read research summaries, heard the case against formal grammar, were introduced to the proposed alternatives, were given practice in trying out activities proposed as alternatives to formal grammar, and in which they finally wrote a curriculum development paper consisting of plans and rationale for changes they intended to make in their own grammar teaching. Certainly a question exists whether the wider audience obtainable through publication of the proposals made in this dissertation would make changes in grammar teaching commensurate with those made by teachers who could actively engage in trials and dialogue with colleagues and with the originator of the proposals. Nevertheless, I assume the responsibility to use publication as a means to stimulate reform of grammar teaching in a wider area.
Changes in the evolution of the proposed synthesis.
Inasmuch as the in-service course which influenced the changes in the English teachers' grammar teaching practices, reported in Chapter V, was taught on three different different occasions between 1974 and 1976, it seems appropriate to identify additions made to the synthesis of approaches described in the previous chapter. These additions include changes made from one course session to another and several retrospective changes in emphasis which have been conceived since 1976. In summer 1974, my "Begone Dull Grammar!" course stressed what is contained in this dissertation concerning the use of sentences that have pointed content meaning, sentence combining and manipulating in production and analysis, three stages of work with sentences, and personal concern (humanistic education) content for some sentence work.

Two changes in the course content and synthesis of approaches resulted from needs expressed by course participants. First was the addition of strategies for teaching parts of speech. Initially I had intended to advocate total elimination of parts of speech instruction. When a majority of teachers indicated they felt a need for at least some ways to cover basic parts of speech in as interesting a way as possible, I decided to include a number of techniques in the course which featured at least secondary emphasis appropriate to parts of speech instruction. The second
change was my adapting portions of the synthesis as originally conceived to elementary teachers in grades two, three, and four. I hadn't anticipated teachers from these grades taking the course, and was in fact initially surprised to learn the extent of formal grammar in the primary grades curriculum in several schools.

Two further changes which evolved in the in-service course between the first and third sessions involved the building of theoretical foundations and the development of the components for teaching usage. The theoretical foundations resulted from my reading previously discussed works of Piaget, Vygotsky, and Chomsky. The usage components were derived from my reading Pooley (1974) and adapting several principles and lists of forms suggested for concentrated diagnosis and teaching. One final change instituted in the third course session was provision for teachers to make a critical analysis of their own textbooks and grammar curriculum, along lines suggested in Chapter IV. This self-analysis of barriers and weaknesses in the specific teacher's materials and methods seems in retrospect to be a particularly important addition.

The synthesis of approaches proposed in Chapter II also reflects several changes made as the result of my reading, writing, and reflection in the time since summer 1976, when I taught "Begone Dull Grammar!" for the third time. The most important change is the increased prominence that I propose
for vocabulary and diction in the context of sentence work. Acquiring increased understandings of word meanings rather than word forms is a goal based on developmental characteristics of language acquisition discussed in Chapter III. The decline in SAT verbal aptitude scores discussed in Chapter I is a further justification for emphasizing word meanings over word forms. Literary examples of one sentence compositions, such as epigrams and short poems, are likely to use many words unfamiliar to students. Rather than taking this fact as a reason not to use such literary examples, this particular feature makes such sentences particularly good for work in vocabulary, semantics, and diction. This might be done through listing and discussing synonyms, aided by both a dictionary and thesaurus. Also similar words using the same root, prefix, or suffix could comprise the vocabulary work with unfamiliar words in sentence study. In composition of sentences students may manipulate words as well as syntax, developing lexical as well as syntactic flexibility.

A further aspect of this dissertation that did not have the place in the in-service course that I give it in Chapter II is the use of the history of grammar teaching as a basis for divesting teachers of the mistaken notion that the traditional grammar textbook approach to teaching about language has a long and solid tradition behind it. It is a question for a possible future study to see whether knowing
the history of grammar teaching affects teachers' willingness to abandon the teaching of formal grammar. My own preference is not to isolate this one variable, however; I see it as one more basis to justify moving away from formal grammar instruction without worrying whether it is this argument, another, or some positive alternatives, or a combination of all these factors that causes teachers to change their ideas and methods of teaching grammar.

Possible follow-up research topics. This dissertation has focused mostly on the problem of countering the capacity of formal grammar to continue to receive the proportion of the English curriculum that it often does. Related directly to this is the possibility of research on the characteristics of teachers that make them reluctant to decrease their commitment to the teaching of formal grammar. Personality variables related to openness to experience may be significant, given the fact that some teachers from the "Begone Dull Grammar!" course persist in believing in the value of formal grammar instruction despite encountering massive evidence against its effectiveness, including the failure of their own students to retain or apply what they have been taught. As a speculation in Chapter I indicated, too, the variable of teachers' achievement motivation may also be significant, since both curricular change in general and the changes proposed in this dissertation in particular entail more work than simply continuing to teach formal grammar by
the book.

Several other aspects concerning the implementation of the approaches advocated in Chapter V seem to be of possible interest for future study. The question of how students' attitudes toward sentence work are affected might be studied. Incidental comments by teachers reporting on their implementation efforts indicate both overall improvement of attitude and small pockets of resistance among students. Another interesting topic is the value of one sentence composition as an aid to increasing skills in critical reading and reading comprehension. Chapter V suggests some possible ways to connect reading and literary study with sentence work, but this could also be adapted as a core approach by reading teachers. A further topic concerns the question of whether there is longitudinal regression to formal grammar instruction among the teachers reported on in Chapter V. Whether the combination of local pressures and the initial novelty wearing off are countered by the persuasiveness of factors which caused the original change is a question that could be investigated, perhaps by readministering the implementation questionnaire in several years. It might also be a worthwhile study to investigate the same matters touched on in the implementation questionnaire, only using a controlled experimental design, possibly supplemented by documented case studies.
Perhaps the most important implication from Chapter V had to do with the effects on student performance in using language. It is possible to do research with student writing samples, using error reduction and syntactic maturity measures, as some other studies have done. Guidelines suggested by research manuals, such as Braddock, et al. (1963), would mean having up to five writing samples from each student, of at least one hundred words each, with preferably a follow-up study to measure longitudinal effects—all evaluated by expensive and laborious scoring procedures. Before incurring the time and expense involved in this, it might be better to consider the empirical basis for particular features of the synthesis, derived from studies discussed in Chapters II and III. Also, the dichotomy between empirical and theoretical studies might itself be reconsidered. In natural science these two kinds of studies strengthen each other, empirical studies correcting or proving theories, and sometimes stimulating the development of new theories, and theoretical studies explaining previous empirical studies and often suggesting new ones. The theoretical portions of this dissertation help explain the empirical findings of grammar research and show consistency with those findings. Given these reasons for predicting composition improvement, a single researcher would seemingly be ill-advised to expend the time, expense, and energy that it would take to use traditional measures in assessing
students who are taught to produce and study sentences in the manner advocated in Chapter V.

A different kind of question of a more theoretical nature considers the possibility of an entire English department or school system implementing the alternatives to formal grammar advocated in this dissertation. Questions of sequence and redundancy would then arise; however these needn't cause great concern. What makes formal grammar instruction so dull in many cases is the sheer force of repetition of the same content, particularly at developmental levels at which it is not likely to be mastered. The kind of grammar system proposed in Chapter V is less likely to have the problem of repetition, however, particularly because the emphasis is on creating pointed content meanings for sentences. Grammatical forms comprise a limited collection of abstract categories; sentence content comprises an unlimited array of possibilities ranging from concrete to abstract. Further, one sentence compositions may be used quite unobtrusively as part of literature study, discussion, newspaper study, and composition. What might be repeated in the main features of the synthesis proposed in Chapter V may be done in so many different contexts that dull repetition simply isn't the kind of problem that it is with formal grammar.

As far as repetition is concerned with such matters as usage, spelling, punctuation, and syntactic manipulation,
the key to effective sequence lies in diagnosis of individual needs, mainly through writing samples. Repetition can be, after all, an effective practice in skill acquisition. Teachers do need, however, to ascertain whether particular skills have been mastered. The more limited the strategy is, the more critical the matter of sequence and repetition becomes. Thus sentence combining and other syntactic manipulation strategies require more careful sequencing than does putting content meaning into sentence work. In any case, these points are somewhat academic unless and until whole departments and school systems actually revamp their grammar and language study curriculum along the lines I have advocated.

A more practical area for further development concerns desirable student evaluation and grading procedures to use with the proposed changes in grammar teaching. Traditional grammar teaching uses right-wrong tests and exercises at very low cognitive levels. The ease of grading these tests and exercises comprises a chief appeal of grammar textbooks and workbooks. Evaluating and grading student sentence composition, revisions, and development of vocabulary, diction, usage, spelling, and punctuation all present a range of problems. With productive sentence activities, I have suggested to teachers that they use rating scales based on criteria that are made public before assignments are due, that students, peers, and the teacher all make ratings, and
that a folder of student work be reviewed periodically for longitudinal progress evaluation. Perhaps because English teachers are accustomed to the problems of evaluating and grading a variety of non-objective productions, only one teacher responding to the questionnaire commented on any difficulty in grading the kinds of alternative grammar approaches described in this dissertation.

Finally, when one considers the number of sentences we say each day to ourselves, in dialogue with others, and occasionally in writing--particularly in light of the observation that at any one moment it is one sentence that we are thinking, saying, or writing--then it ought to become apparent how great the potential is for teaching students to use sentences in virtually every possible way. Through its preoccupation with superficial and theoretical concerns, formal grammar teaching has failed to realize the possibilities for affecting students use of sentences. If we are to affect students' use of sentences, we must more frequently be willing to use the direct means of having students use sentences. This dissertation has tried to show how work with the sentence can do much more than grammar teaching has heretofore done, how it can be much more in touch with the true basics that underly human communication and language. Chomsky and Miller (1968, p. 47) said, "Sentences have a compelling power to control both thought and action." By showing students better ways to use sentences, we may--in
our most successful efforts—increase their effective control over their own thought and action. This dissertation has tried to point the way toward this goal.
APPENDIX

Course Syllabus for "Begone Dull Grammar!"
Course Implementation Questionnaire
Cover Letter To Accompany Implementation Questionnaire
Data Summary of Questionnaire Results
Annotated Bibliography for Five Groupings of Sentences
List of Teacher-Brainstormed Application for Sentence Types
Defining Parts of Speech
Course Syllabus for "Begone Dull Grammar!"

--An intensive seminar and workshop course for teachers who have to or want to teach grammar

Course objectives are designed to give you opportunity to do each of the following:

1. Discuss and brainstorm what concerns and specific problems have led you to take this course; set and rank-order individual workshop goals;

2. Read, hear, and discuss what research says and speculate on what it might say about teaching grammar;

3. Clarify barriers to having grammar be more interesting and effective; relate these barriers to your own curriculum and teaching practices; select or develop means to overcome barriers related to your teaching;

4. Learn to distinguish "authentic" sentences from "dummy" sentences; comprehend the resulting expanded range of possible language development activities and possibility for relating sentence study and production to other aspects of the English curriculum;

5. Gain practice in working with and understanding single sentence discourse forms, including:
   a. Signs, Captions, Telegrams, Insults, Graffiti, Badges, and Bumper Stickers
   b. Limericks, Haiku, and other short poem forms
   c. Proverbs, Epigrams, Pensees, Morals for Fables
   d. Thought Cards, Discussion Summaries, Single Sentence Generalizations
   e. Self-concept and Human Relations Exercise Statements, Learning Feedback Statements;

6. Learn techniques for sentence manipulation: expanding, reducing, revising, and combining--for syntactic flexibility and rhetorical effectiveness;

7. Learn up-to-date linguistic viewpoints on correct usage items and usage items no longer considered incorrect;

8. Learn ways to coordinate individualized improvement of errors actually made, in both grammar and mechanics (including spelling);

9. Learn ways to extend sentence study and production techniques to paragraph and longer compositions;
10. Learn ways to make self-awareness, personal growth, and human relations part of sentence study and production;

11. Learn ways to integrate sentence production and study with other language arts objectives and activities, particularly those described in James Moffett's *A Student-centered Language Arts Curriculum, Grades K-13* and in the *Interaction* language arts program;

12. Learn possible approaches for Parts of Speech/Syntax Analysis, using various activities and games to heighten interest;

13. Find out some results of trials conducted by teachers who previously took this course;

14. Adapt or develop a synthesis of ideas from course into a system for teaching a more interesting and effective grammar; describe this system in project notebook and a final curriculum development paper.

**Required reading:**


*Interaction* booklets and *Teacher's Guide*, courtesy of Houghton Mifflin:

*Dictionary of Local Lingo*, Level 2 or 3, by Bobby and Michael Seifert and students

*Limericks*, Level 2 or 3, edited by Irving Wasserman and Betty Jane Wagner

*Haiku*, edited by E. Graham Ward and Floren Harper

*Epigrams*, edited by E. Graham Ward

Also, a variety of short reprints, including research summaries

**Grading criteria, for an "A" in course: mastery of course objectives as indicated in four productive ongoing works--**

1. Thought and Sentence Journal, responding to key questions and ideas in the course;

2. Key Concept Notes and quizzes;
3. Folder of workshop assignments in sentence study, production, and manipulation;

4. Project notebook and final paper.
Course Implementation Questionnaire (verbatim)

"BEGONE DULL GRAMMAR!" IMPLEMENTATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Rating Scale for Items 1-12:

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<td>3</td>
<td>Mostly</td>
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Write the appropriate 0-4 rating for each item below.

1. To what degree have you made the sentence the basic unit of study and production in your grammar teaching? Comment:

2. To what degree have you sought to have content meaning be a characteristic of the sentences that your students write or study? Comment:

3. To what degree have you had students manipulate, revise, discuss, combine, and question the sentences they write? Comment:

4. To what degree have you sought to have students use the three stages of composing, manipulating and revising, and correcting errors in their productive sentence work? Comment:

5. To what degree have you connected sentence study and production approaches to other areas and activities in the English curriculum? Comment:

6. To what degree have you sought to show students the transfer values of their developing the ability to "say a lot in a little?" Comment:

7. To what degree have you sought to limit the time and scope given to parts of speech instruction, combining it wherever possible with activities allowing for secondary learning, creativity, meaning, and fun? Comment:
8. To what degree would you say you have developed an adequate replacement for the dull and ineffective aspects of formal grammar in your curriculum?
Comment:

9. To what degree have you replaced traditional grammar with the course's alternative approaches, particularly those you incorporated in your "BDG!" course project?
Comment:

10. To what degree have you experienced satisfaction in implementing changes referred to in question 9?
Comment:

11. To what degree have the alternative grammar approaches that you've implemented seemed to satisfy the external "political" expectations that grammar will be taught?
Comment:

12. To what degree have you encountered barriers to implementing your course curriculum project?
Comment:

13. If you encountered barriers, what were they (list them below and/or on back)?

14. Any general comments summarizing your viewpoint on the practical value of what you learned in the "Begone Dull Grammar!" course will be appreciated, below and/or on the back.

Thank you! Please use the accompanying envelope to return your completed questionnaire to me before May 1.
Cover Letter To Accompany Implementation Questionnaire (verbatim)

March 31, 1977

Dear "Begone Dull Grammar!" Alumnus:

Enclosed is a questionnaire and return mailing envelope related to the "Begone Dull Grammar!" course you took with me. It is very important to my dissertation work that you fill out this questionnaire and return it as soon as possible, before the end of April. Notice that there are 12 "rating" questions and only two verbal response items, meaning the questionnaire should take a very minimal part of your time. I have also included brief spaces for any explanatory comments that you may wish to make for any of your ratings. Please give your honest personal judgments, based on your actual teaching experience, without slanting your responses in any way to make them say what you think I want to hear. While the questionnaire data will not be critical to the approval of my dissertation, I'd like to feel as confident as possible in the accuracy of generalizations about the "implementability" of the course's approaches to grammar teaching. Thank you for your attention to this request which, as I said, is very important to me.

Sincerely yours,

P.S. If you know of colleagues who might want to take "Begone Dull Grammar!" this summer, you might mention to them that it will be offered July 11-29, Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m.-Noon, at Worcester State College.
Summary Chart of Questionnaire Results
(N=30; see previous pages for actual questionnaire)

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1. Making Sentences the Basis of Grammar

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2. Using Pointed Content Meaning in Sentence Work

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3. Having Students Manipulate and Revise Sentences

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4. Using Stages of Composing, Revising, and Editing

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5. Connecting Sentence Work to Other English Areas

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6. Seeking to Show Transfer Value

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7. Limiting Parts of Speech Instruction; Combining With Other Contexts
Reported Results

8. Have Developed Adequate Replacement for Ineffective Aspects of Formal Grammar

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9. Replaced Traditional Grammar With Course's Alternative Approaches

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10. Experienced Satisfaction in Implementation Efforts

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11. Found Alternative Approaches Satisfy External Expectations That Grammar Will Be Taught

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12. Encountered Barriers to Implementation

**Question 13: Barriers listed by ten teachers**

Lack of administrative support, understanding, or interest (4 teachers).
Time too limited with other requirements in curriculum (4 teachers).
Other teachers expect "back to basics" and formal grammar (4 teachers).
A few students objected to lack of formal grammar (2 teachers).
Own habits, conformity, resistance from self were barriers (2 teachers).
Annotated Bibliography for Five Groupings of Sentence Types

Grouping 1: Signs, Captions, Telegrams, Insults, Graffitti, and Bumper Stickers

*Kids* magazine

(Many environmental sources can be used for examples. Insults are a normal part of children's oral culture (cf. Opie, 1959), and knowing how universal they are may help take some sting out of them for youngsters. Teachers who feel this area is too dangerous may be just taking a "head-in-the-sand" approach. Between matching insults to story characters and stressing the value of clever wit in them, much of what will normally be painful can be lessened. See Chapter V for additional suggestions.)

Grouping 2: Thought Cards, Discussion Summaries, and Single Sentence Generalizations


(Berelson and Steiner's volume gives numerous examples of one sentence statements in the present tense of generalization, derived from a variety of research and theory in the social sciences. Because "thought cards" consist of virtually any kind of statement a student would want to write and share on a 3"x5" card, many of the other sentence types and sources may be used as examples. Discussion summary statements may be compiled, providing an interesting collection both for the groups which write them and for members of other groups and classes.)

Grouping 3: Self-Concept Statements, Human Relations Exercise Statements, and Learning Feedback Statements
Canfield, Jack and Wells, Harold. *100 Ways to Enhance Self-Concept In the Classroom.* Prentice-Hall, 1976.

(Canfield and Wells have a book with excellent short quotations, many single sentence statements, as well as student exercises involving sentence production. Section six, called "the language of the self," is particularly valuable for language work with personal impact. This book is clearly usable in elementary classrooms and quite adaptable to secondary schools. It is a key resource for any teacher wanting to link sentence work to the deep motives which give rise to language.

*Composition for Personal Growth* contains sixty-four one sentence composition activities for working with identity, human relations, and values concerns. An excellent chapter on implementing the approaches in the book has many suggestions for dealing with student attitudes and other problems that may seem to be barriers. Note Chapter V in this dissertation for a discussion of how sentence expansion and manipulation approaches can deepen the value of these exercises.

*Reaching Out* contains theory and skill practice activities for over fifty specific interpersonal skills. Many of these activities either involve or may be adapted to composing one sentence statements with pointed meaning. Chapters on increasing communication skills, verbal expression of feelings, and helpful styles of listening and responding should be of particular interest to English teachers. Much of the material in the book was developed for Project *Youth,* a program that trains high school students to help other youth who are lonely or isolated. Secondary school teachers can find much to adapt, including specific behavioral skill objectives in human relations.)

Grouping 4: Limericks, Haiku, and other short poetry forms


(Limericks provide a well-motivated context for teaching rhythm and meter, as well as lessening some students' negative attitudes toward poetry. Since many limericks consist of two sentences, they also are good for practice in hearing and making end-sentence punctuation, a chief transcriptive skill need for students who write run-on and "comma splice" sentences. Further, few other forms are so well adapted to teaching the use of the semicolon, since that punctuation is so typically used in the limerick. Limerick contests are often run in newspapers, and this may be done in classrooms as well, either on specialized or open topics.

Haiku is a form particularly well suited to working with concrete language and imagery. Neither the commonly cited syllable-count restriction nor the trend to introduce haiku in elementary school ought to be followed. In Japanese, the form fits comfortably into the seventeen syllable count because of characteristics of the language and vocalized punctuation that are not matched in English. It is probably better to have students work on trying to find an evocative sensory observation, in an instant of time, with a touch of surprise in the third line—cast in a short, three line form. Many superficial haiku have been produced by stressing syllables and introducing the form too early, before students find it easy to give the reflective turn to sensory observation that characterizes many of the most effective haiku.)
Sources that have been listed for poetry in general are of particular help in appealing to students who have negative attitudes about reading and writing poetry. Once these attitudes are transformed, it is also possible to show students much about both compressed syntax and careful word selection through close analysis of and response to short poems.

Grouping 5: Proverbs, Epigrams, and Pensees

________. I Touch the Earth, the Earth Touches Me. Doubleday and Co., 1972.

(Chapter V and the next page in this appendix describe many ways for using these one sentence forms. Proverbs may be used in a number of grade levels, and are suited particularly well for teaching both metaphor and the distinction between literal and figurative meaning. The advantage of using a form such as proverbs for teaching matters such as metaphor is that the complete context of this one sentence discourse allows context to show effectiveness and meaning, as well as being able to teach technical features of language.

Epigrams and Pensees are probably best used with older students who can appreciate the wit and wisdom that tends to be characteristic of this form. Syntactic compression in epigrams, and particularly effective word choice in pensees are two aspects of language easy to stress in these forms. As noted in Chapter V, they also make excellent discussion and writing topics.)
List of Teacher-Brainstormed Applications
For Sentence Types

Brainstorming Question: What are possible ways to use and follow-up one sentence compositions, after you have students do whatever grammar/manipulation/combining with them?

**Telegrams:** Send to and between famous and fictitious characters; Compose singing telegrams; Send telegrams in role-playing situation contexts; Post the best/cleverest on board; Have contests for clearest message in fewest words, etc.

**Captions:** Do in context of graffitti, insults, bumper stickers, advertising; Describe pictures of self with captions; Make humorous captions for pictures in textbooks, yearbook, etc.

**Signs:** Make your own highway and sidewalk signs; Use signs as basis for concrete poetry and "found" poetry; Personal coat-of-arms for self or famous/fictitious person; Make picket and protest signs for role-playing situations; Public building signs; Signs to indicate what mood someone is in could be worn as notice to others, or used to signal actors for improvising emotions, etc.

**Limericks:** Clap out beats to teach meter and syllabication; Write humorous greeting cards; Use to describe actual and embarrassing situations; Write limericks between and about famous or fictional characters, etc.

**Haiku:** Use to teach sensory imagery, figures of speech, conciseness and compression of poetic language; Illustrate them; Write haiku to fit a photo; Write haiku that fit a precise moment in interactions of famous or fictional characters, etc.

**Other Short Poems:** Review parts of speech through cinquain; Break poem into kernel sentences and do the reverse to show compression of poetry; Illustrate them; Discuss the idea in them and list examples of verifying or modifying experiences; Make booklets and anthologies of collected and original short poetry, etc.

**Proverbs:** Write original proverbs; Write fable leading up to a proverb used as the moral; Rewrite or update proverb; Change metaphorical proverb into a witty epigram; Collect family sayings and proverbs; Rank-order proverbs on the basis of "truth"; Discuss and think up instances to fit or contradict proverbs; Scramble proverbs by cutting them in
half and playing "mix and match," or try composing other
half, etc.

**Epigrams:** Rank-order for "truth"; Discuss or write on reac-
tions, giving instances to fit or contradict; Express
feelings about meanings; Use epigram as topic for panel or
mock panel discussion; Brainstorm situations that might
have led the author to write epigram, etc.

**Pensees:** Collect them in a "reflections" journal; Write or
match them to real or fictional characters; Explain them;
Revise "I learned that I . . ." statements into pensees;
Collect "personal truth" pensees, etc.

**Morals for Fables:** Create morals to fit newspaper stories,
parables, or fables with the moral left off; Write fable
to go with moral; Illustrate in cartoon fashion; Have
groups act out fables--class guesses morals; Charades;
Improvise situations that would logically lead to moral,

**Thought Cards (Either Worn or just Written):** Use for self-
awareness work, since it's easier for many students to
write than to speak ideas; Use for "I learned . . . , I
feel . . . , I need . . . , I wish . . ." statements; Use
for feedback after group activity or assignment; Express
reactions to book, story, or poem; Form discussion groups
on the basis of reactions to thought cards; Write for real
or fictional characters; Have students project into teach-
er's role in given situations, then write thought cards,
including "I need . . . , I feel . . ." statements, etc.

**Minimal Situations:** Use them for pantomimes; Brainstorm pos-
sible solutions or outcomes; Improvise different outcomes;
Specialize for dramatic monologue, interior monologue,
dramatic dialogue, and socratic dialogue; Lead into script
and story writing; Draw cartoons to match; Improvise them;
Use as basis for improvisation cycle leading to group
writing of scripts, etc.

**Self-Awareness Sentences:** Do expanding, combining, and
manipulating to enlarge potential insights; Use series of
them to suggest autobiography; Write for real or fictional
characters; Keep a "Who I Am, Who I Am Becoming" journal
of these; Keep a journal of "Sentences I Say To Myself,"
extc.
Defining Parts of Speech

A definition for a grammatical part of speech may indicate any of three aspects: form, meaning, or syntax. Traditional grammar uses only the "meaning" aspect, while structural grammar supplies formal and syntactic definitions. Perhaps students can learn the basic parts of speech more easily if they have a handout defining all three aspects; exercises in identifying these parts of speech, or more creative contexts for applying these definitions, might be used for reinforcement.

A. Formal: a word is a certain part of speech because of its ending, or some other criteria based on the structure of the word (structural definition)
B. Semantic: a word is a certain part of speech because of what it does (naming, expressing action, describing, etc.) (traditional definition)
C. Syntactic: a word is a certain part of speech because it makes sense when used in a position relative to other words of a sentence (test-frame definition)

Nouns
A. Words that can show plural number by adding -s, or -es, and can show possession by adding -'s or (s'); words using "noun-making endings," such as -er, -or, -ness, -ment, -ship.
B. Words that name something—a person, place, or thing.
C. Words that can be preceded by articles (a, an, the), possessives (my, your, his, her, our, their, its), or demonstratives (this, that, these, those). Words that make sense filling the blanks:
   Let's talk about (a, an, the, a little)_______.
   The_______is (are) good.

Verbs
A. Words indicating time (often) by using endings such as -es (or -s), -ed, or -d, and -ing. Words that become verbs by adding endings such as -ize, -fy, or -ify.
B. Words expressing action or existence, and indicating time—present (now), past, or future.
C. Words that work with "helping verbs" such as: forms of be (am, is, are, were), forms of have, (has, had), or will/would, shall/should, can/could, may/might, or must. Words that make sense filling the blanks:
   Let's_______(it).
   Let it_______.
Adjectives
A. Words that (often) show degree (comparison) by ending -er, -est. Words that become adjectives by adding such endings as -able, -ible, -ful, -less.
B. Words that describe or otherwise qualify the meaning of a noun. Words that tend to answer the question, "What was it like?"
C. Words that can (often) be used with "intensifiers" such as very, quite, more, most, fairly, extremely (this characteristic is true of adverbs, as well). Adjectives often precede a noun. Words that make sense filling the blanks:
The__________one was very__________.
The__________ones were very__________.

Adverbs
A. Words that (often) have the ending -ly (usually an adjective may be changed to an adverb by adding -ly). Comparisons are formed by adding -er and -est.
B. Words that tell when, where, or how something is done or happens, thus qualifying the meaning of a verb.
C. Words that can (often) be moved to several different places in a sentence without disrupting the meaning. Words that make sense filling the blank:
Somebody did something__________. (When? Where? How?)
References


Potter, H. E. Abilities and disabilities in the use of English found in the written composition of entering freshmen at the University of California. Bureau of Research in Education, University of California, 1922, No. 12.


