

STRUCTURAL LINGUISTIC PRINCIPLES IN TEACHING
OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL GRAMMAR

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Master of Education degree
in the School of Education
Montana State College
December, 1963

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The nature of English grammar instruction in the American schools has been subjected to many criticisms. According to DeBoer¹ these criticisms generally stem from two beliefs: (1) that the kind of grammar is not in harmony with current linguistic science and (2) that the methods used contradict our best present knowledge of how language is learned. Much of the conflict exists between the traditional rules which originated in the later 1600's and the modern views of the science of linguistics. Since many of the language textbooks still contain some of the theory and practice of the 1700's and the 1800's, linguistic scientists assert that the traditional grammar, imported from the Greek and Latin concepts of the parts of speech, does not give an adequate description of English, especially the English as it is used in today's world.

The issue is confused even more by the fact that grammar has two different meanings which some people use synonymously. In one sense the term grammar refers to a body of proscribed usages characteristic of certain standards of English, and in the other sense the term suggests the attempt to describe the structure of language in a systematic way.

Up to the turn of the century traditional grammar with emphasis placed upon parts of speech, parsing, and analysis held a secure place

¹DeBoer, J. J., "Grammar in Language Teaching," Children's Writing: Research in Composition and Related Skills, p. 32.

in the curriculum. Studies concerning the effectiveness of traditional grammar were conducted at various times in different places by experienced and inexperienced people. The results which have been reported are negative as far as the value of grammar in the improvement of language expression is concerned.² Doubts began to be expressed, and a widespread revolt was made upon the "useless and outgrown subject." Grammar was deleted from many courses of study but did not stay out.

It is difficult to find examples of specific statements by specialists which give support to the elimination of grammar from the program in general education. In fact, at the Yale Conference on the Teaching of English in March, 1957, the Committee on Grammar stated that grammar should be taught in the secondary schools. They felt that this statement was necessary because some teachers deny that grammar should be taught. Some teachers who profess to be abandoning it are, in reality, only abandoning some sections of it.

It may be that the discussions of the nature and extent of grammar taught have given rise to the erroneous belief that the educational profession has discouraged the teaching of all grammar. After completing his investigation in 1956, Pooley³ concluded that a great number of elementary school children are taught a large number of formal grammatical concepts, that these same materials are begun again

²Searles, J. R., and Carlsen, G. R., "Language, Grammar, and Composition," Encyclopedia of Educational Research, pp. 454-470.

³Pooley, R. C., Teaching English Grammar, pp. 33-53.

in the junior high school and are carried a little farther, and that still the same materials are repeated year after year through the twelfth grade. He found that the results do not in any way justify the time and effort apparently put forth in the endless repetition, and suggests that "the traditional curriculum in the teaching of grammar has sought to teach too much grammar, too early, too fast."⁴

A justification of the study of grammar has been that it makes the student consciously aware of right and wrong in language. It is reasonable to hope that the student will derive from the instruction a conscious notion of what constitutes a well-formed sentence and of the syntactic resources of the English language. The student can be shown that writers intentionally use ungrammatical choices, at times, for certain effects. Conlin expressed his belief in grammar in the following way:

Grammar conceived as a knowledge of the form and pattern of a language properly related to the use of the language is of great importance, since language is the vehicle of all learning.⁵

A person who questions the nature of grammar instruction is Sledd. He makes an appraisal of what must immediately be done and recognizes the cautions that must be observed in doing it.

What then, in summary, does the present situation demand of a grammarian who believes that the English grammar should be an important part of the general education of American citizens and of the special education of English teachers? The general direction in which he should move is clear; the conventional

⁴Ibid., p. 133.

⁵Conlin, D. A., "Can Traditional Grammar Be Modernized?" The English Journal 47:190, October, 1960.

schoolroom grammar is defective and must be brought more nearly in line with the principles and methods of contemporary linguistics. The movement in this direction is already too strong to be resisted, even if resistance were wise. Yet the schoolroom tradition is the only grammatical tradition which many teachers, students, and laymen know; it is not totally false or misguided; and since contemporary linguistics is not monolithic but various, alive, and changing, no one can offer a new description of English as a grammatical faith in which the untutored may finally and safely rest. Only the lightminded opponents of any grammatical training will profit if the change from old grammars to new is attempted too arrogantly or too rapidly.⁶

If the traditional grammar, in itself, is neither valid nor teachable, as some people claim, what can be done? If change seems to be inevitable, can a system be developed that will enable a teacher of English to select and teach those principles of English grammar which are useful to the junior high school students? One recent study⁷ reveals that one fourth of college language classes for prospective teachers of English are based on the new developments in structural grammar. Whether the new grammar will be more effective than the old in raising the level of communication has not been determined because of lack of evidence.

Statement of the Problem

The writer has contended that there must be a flexible plan which improves students' abilities to communicate more effectively. The purpose of this investigation was to select structural linguistic

⁶Sledd, James., A Short Introduction to English Grammar, p. 9.

⁷DeBoer, op. cit., p. 38.

principles that may strengthen the present procedures used by teachers of English in the junior high school. The endeavor was not to avoid the traditional grammar but to find the best principles which can be used to supplement. The writer's interest has been based on the conviction that the needs of the time oblige teachers to find ways to teach grammatical structures of English sentences more rapidly and effectively than is now being done.

There is at the present time no one analysis of the grammar of English which is universally accepted. If one of the major aims of the language arts program is the development of sound communication skills in all students so that they will become more effective and responsible members of the democratic society, then the teaching of grammar must be evaluated in such terms.

Procedures

The procedures used in the study consisted of library research and a survey of teacher practices. A review of literature was made to provide a background of the development of theories and practices of teaching English grammar in the junior high school. English teachers of grades 7, 8, and 9 in the public schools of Gallatin County, Montana, and of Barron County, Wisconsin, were asked to complete a questionnaire regarding their present practices for teaching English grammar. The survey was made in two ways. A personal explanation and a letter stating the purposes of the investigation preceded each questionnaire. In many instances, interviews were held after the questionnaires were completed.

Limitations

Three limitations were placed upon the investigation. The sampling was limited to teachers of English of grades 7, 8, and 9 in the public schools of two counties. Because time was limited, the interviews were short. It was felt that a more thorough study of grammar could be made if subject matter could be held at a minimum, so the discussions involved traditional grammar and structural grammar.

Definitions

Because of misinterpretations, recognized definitions of terms should be mentioned. For use in this paper grammar is defined as the systematic study of relationships of words, phrases, and clauses within the English sentence. The chief emphasis is upon the parts of speech and how these work together to form a sentence. Usage refers to the established habits of an individual in using language in speech and writing. Traditional or formal grammar, authoritarian in nature, was developed to explain the structure of Greek and Latin. Rules were made to cover specific situations with chief emphasis upon the eight parts of speech, parsing, and analysis. Structural grammar, sometimes called descriptive or linguistic grammar, directs its attention to the systematic patterns of the English sentence. The stress is inductive, thinking based upon the scientific techniques of science. Linguistics teaches people to look at language from the viewpoints that change is normal, that spoken language determines usage more than written work, and that correctness rests upon usage and the situation in which it is

used.

The first step of the study was to determine the development and the theories of grammar. Results of the investigation will be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR

In the current controversy over English grammar, Allen identifies the four major disputants. The assumptions and nature of these grammars will be briefly discussed in order to clarify some of the statements which have been made about them. Some authors have labeled structural grammar as Grammar C and Grammar D. Others have referred to traditional grammar as Grammar A and Grammar B. These groups include the traditional grammar which has the most ancient origin of the English language and the generative grammar, the most recent view. Briefly they are listed in the following order:

1. Grammar A: the "traditional" grammar which has its foundations in the eighteenth century. The major figures are Joseph Priestly (1761), Robert Lowth (1762), George Campbell (1776), and Lindley Murray (1795).¹
2. Grammar B: the "historical" grammars of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, particularly the comprehensive grammar of the Danish scholar, Otto Jespersen (1914).
3. Grammar C: the "descriptive" or "structural" grammars which are generally based upon the theories of Leonard Bloomfield (1914, 1933).
4. Grammar D: the "generative" or "transformational" grammar of Noam Chomsky (1957) and Robert Lees (1960).²

¹The dates following the names are the years when the authors published their major works.

²Thomas, Owen, "Grammatici Certant," The English Journal 52: 322, May, 1963.

Traditional Grammar

Historians have stated that the basic English grammar system was originally applied to the Greek language. The Romans borrowed it for their own language and somewhat weakened its effectiveness. In their interest in the revival of classic culture English scholars applied Latin grammar to the English language in the eighteenth century. English had supplanted Latin in the secondary schools in England, so the grammarians tried to make the English fit the Latin pattern. Until the close of the nineteenth century England's eighteenth-century attitudes dominated the teaching of grammar in the United States. Sentences were to be analyzed by parsing of each word or by diagram. This grammar pattern, a corrective device for the improvement of English, persists to the present in some of the classrooms. Technical terminology consists of approximately 70 items.³

Pooley⁴ pointed out that three factors in the growth of the demand for correctness which these grammarians attempted to meet were (1) the notions that English was a barbarous language in need of reform, (2) the middle class must be helped, and (3) the philosophy must follow "rule" and "reason" in every aspect of life.

The grammarians tried to formulate definitive rules of syntax and usage. They based their rules partly on the rules of Latin and partly on intuition because they seemed to ignore historical change in

³Fries, C. C., Structure of English, p. 55.

⁴Pooley, R. C., Teaching English Grammar, pp. 19-20.

language. Lowth and Campbell based their grammars upon the prescriptive models and appealed to meaning in the rules of usage.

One investigator defines concepts which characterize the viewpoint of prescriptive grammar.

1. The standard is written language.
2. Language change, inevitable as it is, represents degeneration.
3. Language changes are to be resisted vigorously.
4. Present rules of grammar describe English as it should be.
5. Usage is "right" or "wrong," and rules determine correctness.⁵

Thus he characterizes the "prescriptive" grammarian as (1) considering the English language in terms of stable rules, (2) regarding change in language as deterioration, (3) referring to the past as the "golden age" of grammar, (4) instructing students in only the "standard" forms of English, and (5) using the written language as the model with spoken language as secondary.

Historical Grammar

Historical grammar has also sought to explain some of the intricacies of the English language. Its explanations are chiefly based on history rather than intuition. Several philologists in the nineteenth century noticed that certain words in different languages were similar. They developed the supposition of language families and illustrated how certain word forms have gradually changed through the

⁵Zimmerman, H. C., Structural Linguistics and High School Grammar, p. 25.

centuries, thus destroying the proposition of the traditional grammarians that there is an ideal language. Grammar B also explains why certain verbs are regular while others are irregular, why words aren't pronounced according to the way they are spelled, and why some people consider "It's me" as correct when according to the eighteenth-century logic of Grammar A, the first person pronoun should be in the nominative case.

Another question is also answered by Grammar B. Plurality occurs regularly throughout English nouns with the exception of a limited number. Most of the rules of plurality can be explained historically and are indicated in one of two ways: (1) by the addition of -s (or its spelling variant -es) to the end of the word, or (2) by mutation, the change of a vowel.

The Danish grammarian, Otto Jespersen, endeavored to salvage the terminology of conventional grammar by placing a system of ranks in words, thereby paving the way for later developments in grammar.

Structural Grammar

Early in the twentieth century Bloomfield⁶ noted that it was possible and valuable to separate the form or structure of language from the meaning of language. Language study was divided into syntax and semantics. Syntactically, he and others spoke of the notion of past time in verbs without referring to the semantic content of a

⁶Thomas, op. cit., p. 324.

particular noun or verb. Other linguists⁷ have started to work on the description of the language as it actually exists. They have sought to record and describe all usage and have not been interested in making judgments ascending to the standards of traditional grammar. Many people accused them of advocating certain usages as being correct when actually, the linguists intend to develop a new, more scientific analysis which will describe more accurately the facts of the English language. They observe levels of usage as relative to the social situation in which language is used.

The descriptivists developed the notion of syntactic levels. The first level deals with approximately 40 basic sounds (phonemes) of language. The second-and-higher level deals with regular combinations of phonemes called morphemes. Most descriptivists define a morpheme of a language as the smallest element which has meaning. A free morpheme is one which can stand by itself in a sentence, and a bound morpheme is one which cannot stand by itself but must be joined to a free morpheme. The third level called the "phrase structure" level deals with combinations of morphemes and provides a means of discussing groups of words such as noun phrases, verb phrases, and prepositional phrases.

Thomas⁸ has shown how the descriptivists redefined some of the concepts found in the traditional grammar. They have made the definitions basically syntactic, whereas the traditional definition is based

⁷Other linguists prominent in the field include Charles C. Fries, H. A. Gleason, Jr., Archibald A. Hill, Harold Whitehall, and Robert A. Hall, Jr.

⁸Thomas, op. cit., pp. 325-326.

on semantics. For example, Grammar C would say that "if a word can be changed to indicate plurality or to indicate possession, then the word is a noun, even if the meaning is not known." Grammar A would define a noun as the "name of a person, place, thing, or idea."

Many linguists are still trying to find ways to classify the linguistic items in the various levels of complexity so that better and more specific statements can be made about the items as members of classes. The linguists claim that the classification is not yet finished, but that it is based on many characteristics within the structural patterns of English. They further claim that more statements can be made than are possible if the traditional classification is used.⁹ Laird¹⁰ asserts that traditional grammar seems to work because it is applied exclusively to sentences made up to demonstrate the truth of the supposed grammatical rules, and that when these devices failed, sentences were changed to fit the rules.

Some grammarians have tried to reduce the parts of speech to two, subjects and modifiers. It was found that the subject and modifier can be complicated structures which need to be broken down into other classifications.

Fries¹¹ made an elaborate attempt to rely upon sentence patterns and accepts as a part of speech any word which can fall into a certain position within the pattern. By studying fifty hours of

⁹Ives, Sumner, "Defining Parts of Speech in English," College English 18:351-358, April, 1957.

¹⁰Laird, Charlton, Miracle of Language, p. 207.

¹¹Fries, op. cit., p. 110

transcribed conversations, he constructed a theory of grammar based upon a system of devices to signal structural meaning. Whitehall¹² also employed the sentence pattern. He makes use of the phoneme defined as all the sound within a spread of sound which hearers would recognize as part of the same word. Much of his work is based upon the rising and falling tone of the spoken voice.

The structural linguists generally recognize that English employs numerous contrastive patterns of arrangement, as well as certain other patterns of form, and that these patterns form parts of the structural whole. Their grammar would consist of making the individual conscious of the potentials and shortcomings of the machinery. The linguists assume that a description of the language is a better tool for the job than one which is full of contradiction and confusion. They recognize the distinction between lexical and structural meanings and then focus their attention upon the major devices which English employs to signal structural meanings. These include word order, structure words used as markers, and words that can be inflected. It is impossible to explain adequately the structural grammar in a short paper. Much stress is put on levels of pitch, intonation, and stress. Its key terms include signals of meaning, phonemes, morphemes, function words, junctures, and pattern and form classes.

The National Council of Teachers of English characterizes the basic concepts evolved by the structural linguists as follows:

¹²Whitehall, Structural Essentials of Written English, pp. 29-40.

1. Language changes constantly.
2. Change is normal.
3. Spoken language is the language.
4. Correctness rests upon usage.
5. All usage is relative.¹³

Thus the descriptive grammarian is supposed to be (1) completely objective about language, (2) interested in how language is used, (3) convinced that languages isn't "good" or "bad," (4) interested in seeing that students become aware of levels of usage, and (5) desirous that students accept cultural approval as the basis for selected usages.

Such discoveries and principles prepared the way for the next development.

Generative Grammar

According to Chomsky, Grammar D is a device for producing or generating English sentences. The three parts of grammars he calls "phrase structure," "transformational structure," and "morphophonemics." The "phrase structure" part of grammar deals with the descriptions of morphemes (according to Grammar C) and presents rules for combining morphemes into simple phrases. For example, a noun phrase consists of a "determiner" (i.e., a word like "the," "my," or "a.") plus a noun, plus a morpheme which indicates whether the noun is singular or plural.

¹³The National Council of Teachers of English, The English Language Arts, pp. 275-279.

He incorporates no adjectives on the phrase "structure level." A similar description of a verb phrase is given.

Part II of Grammar D presents rules for combining phrases. Rules for agreement of subject and verb, for adding adjectives to noun phrases, and for transforming a sentence from the active to the passive voice are listed.

Part III incorporates elements of Grammar C that are concerned with phonemes as well as historical discoveries of Grammar B. Thus generative grammar combines rules that are based on an understanding of the history of English as well as on current and "socially acceptable" usage.

The operation of this grammar follows that the rules of Part I produce the elemental phrases that are part of the core or "kernel" of the English language. If the rules of Part II are applied to the phrases applied in Part I, and if the word-form rules of Part III are carried out, then Chomsky asserts that the result will be a grammatical English sentence called a "kernel."¹⁴ A kernel sentence is simple, active, and declarative, with no complex noun or verb phrases, and has no adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, or prepositions. This grammar is based on the supposition that all sentences in English are either kernel sentences or are developed or "generated" from kernel sentences by optional, but invariable, transformations. The advocates believe that Grammar D is a synthesis of the best features of Grammar A through C and that it can provide an "excellent basis" for the study of meaning.

¹⁴Thomas, op. cit., p. 325.

The work in Grammar C and Grammar D is not yet complete; much work remains to be done. It depends upon the applications to the teaching of grammar in the elementary and secondary schools and the cooperation of experienced teachers through research and experiment.

Summary

As was pointed out at the beginning of the paper, there is at present no one universally accepted description of English grammar. The present state of grammatical study is both interesting and stimulating. It is a picture of different types of grammars, differing in purpose, method, and philosophy.

Traditional grammar was developed to explain the structure of Greek and Latin, and, according to some grammarians, does not provide a very good description of the English language. It was criticized as essentially prescriptive and authoritarian in nature.

Historical grammar concerns itself mainly with the development of the English language. Processes of growth as well as change in English vocabulary become apparent throughout its study.

The structural linguists emphasize the primacy of the spoken language rather than the written, the importance of current usage, and the necessity of objective description and analysis based on form. Their purpose is to reveal the actual means by which the relationships of the words in sentences are indicated. The structural grammar has its own terminology and is at the place where it is being organized as a scientific system to be adapted for use in the schools. Their aim is not to prove that the traditional approach is wrong but that it is

incomplete.

Generative grammar, developed by Chomsky, is a device for producing or generating English sentences. The advocates believe that all sentences are either kernel sentences or are developed from kernel sentences by the addition of words and phrases that transform the sentences.

The best grammarians do not agree as to exactly how the English grammar works, what makes it work that way, or whether it is best understood through analysis starting from meaning or from speech rhythm. There is, however, a general agreement that there are many more important things to be said about the English language, even if there have already been numerous observations of the way it develops.

In the following chapter the writer will present the reported teacher practices on structural grammar and will suggest definite principles that can be applied to the teaching of English grammar in the junior high school.

CHAPTER III

REPORTED PRACTICES FOR TEACHING GRAMMAR IN THE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

In view of the fact that the nature of the English grammar instruction has been questioned and criticized, the writer attempted to find out the present practices of teachers of English grammar in junior high schools. From the literature which comprised the first part of the study, information was gathered which served as the basis for questionnaires that were given to English teachers of grades 7, 8, and 9 in the public schools of Barron County, Wisconsin, and Gallatin County, Montana. The writer had taught at least four years in each county and was acquainted with some of the teachers. A personal interview preceded the answering of the questionnaire, and in most cases, the writer talked with the teachers after the questionnaires were completed. Answers to the following questions were sought:

1. To what extent is structural grammar being used by the teachers?
2. What structural linguistic principles, if any, do teachers suggest for the teaching of English grammar?
3. How do teachers evaluate these principles?

Nature of English Grammar Teaching in Two Counties

The part which the study of grammar plays in the command of language is thought by many teachers of English to be one of the major instructional problems with which schools are confronted. The results of the questionnaire revealed (1) the personal characteristics of the English teachers who completed the questionnaire, (2) teacher

evaluation of structural grammar instruction, and (3) the types of grammar in the junior high schools.

Personal characteristics of teachers. A total of 33 responses (about 92 per cent) was obtained from a possible 36 questionnaires given. The group included nine men and 24 women. Twelve of them had a major degree in English, eight had a minor degree in English, 12 held elementary school teaching degrees, and one had a science major and a physical education minor. Teaching experience ranged from two to 38 years while the number of English students taught per day by each person ranged from 28 to 164. The majority of the respondents stated that 50 per cent to 60 per cent of the class time is used for grammar of some kind or another. The kind was not specified.

Eight of the teachers of English had taken one or more college courses in linguistics. It was noted that 25 of the respondents checked one or more methods of learning about structural grammar. Twenty-two people checked "self-study," 9 checked "institutes," 6 checked "inservice training," and 4 checked "workshops."

Teacher Evaluation of Grammar Instruction. No one indicated the use of only structural grammar in the instruction of English grammar. Many felt that the traditional cannot yet be replaced until the professional leaders identify and describe the work of the structural linguists for the guidance of textbook writers. At the present time, very few textbooks are written for the levels of the junior high school students. All of the respondents listed textbooks that were traditional in viewpoint, but seven teachers reported the use of structural grammar textbooks as references.

Seven of the teachers stated they use only the traditional approach. Reasons included: (1) "the community prefers it," (2) "it is the only method I know," and (3) "the boys are more interested in something definite like traditional grammar."

Sixteen of the respondents indicated that principles of structural grammar are suitable for all students. Three checked "superior" students, four checked "average" students, and one checked "below average" students. About half of the respondents indicated that the principles of structural grammar are suitable for all students.

Grammar principles used. The tabulation of the results of the questionnaires showed that teachers selected principles from traditional grammar and structural grammar which they apply in the teaching of grammar. The number of people that checked the items is indicated on the dotted lines.

The principles of traditional grammar were checked by the following number of people:

- 17 a. The standard is written language.
- 1 b. Language change, inevitable as it is, represents degeneration.
- 2 c. Language changes are to be resisted vigorously.
- 10 d. Present rules of grammar describe English as it should be.
- 12 e. Usage is "right" or "wrong," and rules determine correctness.

The principles of structural grammar were checked by the following number of people:

- 23 a. Language changes constantly.
- 14 b. Change is normal and represents improvement.

4 c. Spoken language is the language.

14 d. Correctness rests upon usage.

14 e. All usage is relative.

It can be seen by the results of the survey that some of the teachers are becoming aware of the implications and applications of some linguistic principles to the tradition of English grammar teaching. Structural grammar is being used to some extent by about 66 per cent of the teachers in 9 different communities in the two counties which the writer surveyed. About half of the teachers of English reported that the principles of structural grammar are suitable for all students, and about 40 per cent of them felt that structural grammar improved class morale.

The following comments recorded from the interviews and taken from questionnaires are fairly representative of the whole group.

"I use both methods but prefer to use the traditional, because the rules of English are very important. I believe in using the standard form."

"I advocate functional, practical, common understanding of English but also feel traditional terms should be taught as background for college courses."

"The more I hear of structural grammar, the more I realize I have used it for years."

"Each supplements and complements the other."

"It is too soon to give a comparison or an evaluation."

"It takes the traditional terminology to explain the structural after students have studied the traditional."

"Structural is better adapted to student needs, but it leaves the student with a rather limited knowledge of the basis of language structure."

During the interviews several teachers expressed interest in learning more about the developments in grammar. Many of them indicated that they seek additional insights in teaching students how to improve the communication skills. It was indicated that there is considerable lag behind the findings of research and recommendation of expert teachers. Plans must be formulated so each teacher can learn of the results as soon as possible.

Generally, the teachers of English concluded that English grammar teaching calls for a carefully planned curriculum, a clear understanding of the needs and learning abilities of the students, and the recognition that a grasp of concepts really matters, not the ability to memorize terms. Some of the junior high school English teachers were sure that the principles of traditional grammar were usable if the teacher recognized that the concepts should be carefully developed by the teacher and immediately applied by the student to various communication situations.

Basic Principles for Teaching Grammar Using the Structural Linguistics Approach

After reviewing literature and talking with English teachers in two counties, the writer presents some linguistic principles suggested and applied by some of the educators. It must be remembered that the success of the application depends upon the teacher who knows

the facts of linguistic science and the research findings in language growth and development.

One linguistic principle which can be effective in helping students to improve their communication skills is the observing and practicing of basic sentence patterns. Anderson¹ pointed out that these patterns, concerned with word order, constitute the backbone and central nervous system of the language. Work with sentence patterns may contribute to the teaching of concepts of word classification and proper placement. The main purpose in stressing sentence patterns is to make the student aware of the resources of the structural signals of the language and then by imitation and creative practice use them in his communication. There is greater emphasis upon constructive practice, and a decrease in the amount of analysis. The student may learn to use grammar by devising statements of his own which will fit into the various sentence patterns of gradual degrees of complexity. Thus, the learning of the parts of speech are gradually and directly related to the student's own speaking and writing. This system places importance on the student's ability to think for himself. Merely learning about the process will not make a good speaker or a good writer. Translating ideas in the various media is the culmination of the language skills.

Pooley² suggests there is one regular pattern, the S-V-O, used

¹Anderson, W. L., "Structural Linguistics: Some Implications and Applications," The English Journal 46: 414, October, 1957.

²Pooley, R. C., Teaching English Grammar, p. 92.

as a basic skeleton from which a variety of sentences is possible because of the types of subjects, verbs, objects, and modifiers available. Hook and Mathews³ say there are five major sentence patterns which carry the burden of 90 per cent of modern American non-fiction. Lloyd and Warfel⁴ mention other patterns.

The inductive approach is another principle that the structural linguists suggest. In any area of instruction a child understands more clearly and retains knowledge better if he observes and draws his own conclusions and inferences. The student is led to use a certain part of speech or sentence structure to express his ideas. From like instances he is led to draw a general conclusion as a definition. Rules are tested in many situations to be sure of validity, and when he is convinced of his observation, he has gained a concept of grammar from his own experience. Pooley⁵ believes that it is not important to know what any word is until it is known what it does, since the recognition of the parts of speech is the recognition of a kind of behavior. Each part of speech is stressed in terms of what it enables one to say or write. The avoidance of definitions to be memorized should reduce the danger of verbalizing concepts not understood. Furthermore, it must be emphasized that not only must the observation be understood but that purposeful practice must be the result.

³Hook, J. N., The Teaching of High School English, p. 93.

⁴Lloyd, D. J., and Warfel, H. R., American English in its Cultural Setting, p. 214.

⁵Pooley, R. C., "What Grammar Shall I Teach?" The English Journal 47: 327-328, September, 1958.

Another principle which might well be applied in the junior high school English program is the use of voice signals in the study of the English language. The attention of pitch, stress, and juncture promises real help, especially in the teaching of sentence structure. The purpose of the voice signals is stated by Anderson:

This phase of the signal system of the language is mainly used to indicate the various mental and emotional attitudes, to differentiate certain parts of speech and pattern parts, to indicate whether an utterance is a statement, request, or question, and to tell whether the utterance is finished.⁶

Several teachers believe that the intonation system and the punctuation system of the English language are not in complete accord, but the relationship should be taught. Almost all marks of punctuation are juncture, signals that can be demonstrated by reading aloud student sentences. Some teachers felt that the oral approach to sentence sense based on the everyday language of adults and children in the business and social world has helped their pupils to become aware of the construction and punctuation of sentences.⁷

The linguists advocate another principle - that of bringing together a number of facts about the language which some traditional textbooks usually discuss separately. Linguists point out that form characteristics which nouns have in common, (i.e., plurals, possessives, the addition of -ity and -ation,) which make them identifiable as nouns,

⁶Anderson, op. cit., p. 417.

⁷Rosenson, J. S., "The Oral Approach to Sentence Sense," The English Journal 47: 425-430, October, 1958.

and the way they pattern in a predication should be taught simultaneously as possible so the students can see the whole picture of grammatical relationships. (There is danger here, and the teacher should proceed cautiously. The abilities of the students and their needs should be considered.) Thus when a noun is taught it is shown as a word, as a phrase, and as a clause. The students then observe the way in which the nouns are functioning in the sentences and construct their own sentences to show how the parts of speech all fit together. While the students are demonstrating their abilities to improve the sentence variety as a result of being able to place phrases and clauses in the different noun roles, the teacher can determine how much understanding is taking place. Similar procedures can take place with the adjective and adverb.

Some teachers suggest that linguists offer some help in showing what elements of grammar can be eliminated. Attempting to state precisely what each modifier modifies is thought by some to be time-consuming and confusing. Two of the teachers suggested that possibly one could use the four word classes identified by Fries in terms of function. His classification is made on the basis of position in the sentence; therefore, words which may be substituted for each other in a given position belong to the same form class. Some linguists point out that students learn that they are not dependent on meaning definitions alone when they attempt to recognize parts of speech, but that these are signalled by their characteristic forms, position in the sentence, and accompanying markers such as determiners and intensifiers.

The linguists' open-minded attitude in recognizing language

changes constitutes what may be considered another useful principle. Linguists are unanimous in attempting to give a picture of the English language as it really is. Their efforts toward truth offers much that will benefit language instruction. They try to give an accurate idea of the English grammar, evolution, position in world affairs, and personal-social usefulness.

Recognizing that language is arbitrary, and that many people will disagree on any analysis of it, might be another important principle in the student's education. Developing habits of objective examination will make the teacher and the student aware that there are many ways in which words of English could be classified and structured. Transfer of this awareness to choice of language items in terms of appropriateness to the time, material, and his own self-image will vary in terms of student abilities and needs. Fries⁷ points out that the chief value of a systematic analysis and description of the signals of structural meaning in English is the insight it can give concerning the way the language works.

Reports of Experiments with Structural Grammar

Professional literature reports a few classroom experiments with structural grammar.⁸ However, the literature does not offer suggestions for selecting elements of the grammar that are presented to the classes. This cause is reasonable because structural grammar is

⁸Corbin, Richard, "Grammar and Usage: Progress but Not Millennium," The English Journal 49:554, November, 1960.

essentially an approach related to changes in the subject matter. The structuralists seek to present the system of English as a functional, personal tool of social integration based upon the true nature of the language.

To determine the practicality of the application of the structural approach for teaching grammar in grade 7 was the purpose of the research conducted for three months by Miller with 108 students in four classes at Muncie, Indiana.⁹ The findings of the study indicated that the structural approach produced a greater relationship between analyzing sentences and being able to write them, that seventh graders grew proficient in using linguistic terminology, and that structural materials were applicable in teaching this age group.

An extensive survey of structural use on the high school level was conducted by Alva¹⁰ in California in 1959. He found that 120 teachers in 88 different schools of various sizes used the approach. Four per cent of the approximately 4,000 teachers of English in the public schools were using structural grammar in varying degrees. The study did not predict the future uses of the grammar.

Successful experiments in teaching structural linguistics to selected high school classes and in educating teachers in an in-service course in structural linguistics resulted in wider use of the approach in grades 7, 9, and 10 at Cheltenham high school at Wyncote,

⁹Miller, Frances, "Structural Plotting For Understanding," The English Journal 51:639, December, 1962.

¹⁰Alva, Charles, "Is Structural Grammar Being Taught?" The English Journal 49:606, December, 1960.

Pennsylvania.¹¹ One of the outcomes of the experiments was the development of a teachers' manual. No attempt was made in the control and experimental classes to relate grammar study to composition. The evidence from the project did not indicate that the traditional or the structural approach improved student writing.

New approaches to grammar have not been worked over sufficiently from various points of view to be accepted on a popular level, but the foundations of what must be regarded as an essentially new science are now being laid by the enthusiasts and the experts who are willing to experiment and present their findings to the educators. Only a few of the experiments have been mentioned in this paper. More are available for evaluation by the reader. Many of the claims of the experimenters may be attacked on the adequacy of the experiments, but some of their findings offer some promise and some concrete evidence for action.

Summary

A growing number of teachers in the United States are experimenting with structural grammar. There is still lack of objective research and valid findings necessary to reach conclusions at the present time, but the influence will be felt more and more in the classrooms. The eventual place of the structural grammar principles for the teaching of grammar in the junior high school will be

¹¹Link, F. R., and Schuster, E. H., "Linguistics in High School: A Report of Action Research," Educational Leadership 19:294, February, 1962.

determined partly by the response to the social pressures exerted upon it and partly by the awareness of teachers to the possibilities of some of the linguistic principles that may be used to reinforce traditional grammar approaches. Many teachers felt that such principles would include the following:

1. Observing and practicing the basic sentence patterns by the student
2. Using the inductive approach when presenting concepts
3. Calling attention to the use of voice signals, such as pitch, stress, and juncture
4. Bringing together a number of facts about each classification
5. Offering some help in knowing what elements of grammar can be eliminated from the English curriculum
6. Recognizing language changes
7. Recognizing that language is arbitrary
8. Relating the description of English to the traditional terminology.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A study was made to determine teacher practices of teaching English grammar in the junior high school. Procedures consisted of library research and questionnaires that were given to teachers of English in grades 7, 8, and 9 in two counties.

Summary

In tracing the development of the grammar of the English language four major groups have been identified, the traditional, the historical, the descriptive, and the generative grammars. The identification is not altogether accurate because some of the principles and philosophies overlap and have paved the way for the later developments. There is at the present time no one analysis of the grammar of the English language which is universally accepted. Much of the confusion about grammar exists between the structural linguists and the traditionalists. Traditional grammar has been criticized as not a scientific analysis of the English language, not adequately descriptive of the English language, and too prescriptive and authoritarian in nature. This criticism has led to the attempt to improve the traditional program of grammar and to the formation of a program based on structural grammar.

The writer attempted to find out what some of the other teachers of English were presenting in the instruction of grammar. It was found that teachers were becoming aware of the possibilities of the

applications of some of the principles of the structural linguists. Research and experimentation are conducted in many places, and the years ahead promise to be a transitional period during which the new approaches are gradually tested as ways of increasing the effectiveness of teaching grammar.

Conclusions

The structural grammar principles promise much help in the instruction of English grammar. It appears that the teacher who is searching for ways to improve his teaching will do well to explore the possibilities for practical help in the science of the structural linguistics. Certainly, there should not be an immediate conversion to the techniques and terminology of the linguists but an open mind and adoption of basic principles that will help the student to improve his tools of communication. There is a danger in putting the structural grammar to work too fast before further research and experimentation results are known.

The teaching of English grammar will never be the same again. Teachers of English will probably be more diligent students of the English language than they have usually been in the past. Because of the controversy teachers have examined and re-evaluated present teaching methods, materials, and aims. They are determining what to draw from structural grammar and what to retain from traditional grammar in order to accomplish the aims of the language arts program.

The practical problems which the teacher continually faces are:
(1) how to present principles of grammar in relation to the student's

ability to understand the concepts of grammar being taught and (2) the student's need for understanding and using the particular concepts in connection with the problems of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. One of the teacher's important tasks is to discover how the students think and feel, what they want to say, and why they want to say it. The writer feels that one of the major purposes of grammar is to enrich the resources of the students so that thought and expression will develop together with a growing maturity of ideas. The structure of ideas which in themselves define and illumine the message must not be neglected. To encourage the ideas to find adequate expression the students can be led to draw from some of the linguistic principles. The concepts which the students derive can be applied to the correction and improvement of their communication according to the idea to be expressed.

Recommendations

If structural grammar is introduced in the junior high school classes of English, many factors such as material difficulty, staff preparedness, student readiness, and availability of materials must be considered. Scope and sequence planning should be done on the local level with reference to local needs and philosophies. However, it is difficult to assign specific aspects of the approach to each grade level. Different needs emerge in different situations. They are planned for carefully through the provision of experiences in the order of the difficulty of the concepts and the continuous growth of the

individual.

Research has definitely influenced the teaching of English to bring about the improvement of aims, material, and methods. Research should be continued and extended, and the results should be made known to educators as early as possible so that its influence may be felt in teaching, textbook writing, and curriculum. Linguists, psychologists, administrators, and teachers working together may bring about vast improvement in the work of the language arts.

The teacher should strive to master the materials, attitude, and techniques of the approach. He should have a very secure knowledge of traditional grammar and be thoroughly acquainted with the structural grammar. College classes, institutes, inservice training, and workshops are invaluable sources of information. Neither the teacher nor the school system should enter into the approach ignorant of the subject matter or of the research evidence about its organization, values, and effectiveness.

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APPENDIX

715 South Tenth Avenue
Bozeman, Montana
October 7, 1963

Dear teachers of junior high school English,

From time to time doubts have been expressed about the nature and usefulness of traditional grammar instruction in the schools. Structural linguists have presented a different approach. Whether the approach will provide a solution to the problem of teaching standard English is, however, another question. The purpose of my study is to determine the extent the principles of structural grammar are being used in the junior high schools in two different agricultural areas of the United States. I have chosen Barron County in Wisconsin and Gallatin County in Montana. Your help is needed. I hope you will find time in your busy schedules to complete the questionnaire.

For my studies there are certain definitions which apply. Grammar is a systematic study of the relationship of words, clauses, and phrases within the English sentence. Traditional grammar is composed of a Latin-based body of principles. A traditional grammarian considers the English language in terms of stable rules, regards change in language as deterioration, instructs students in only the "standard" forms of English, and uses the written language as the model with spoken language as secondary. Structural grammar, sometimes called descriptive or functional, is an application of the scientific methods to the study of language in use. It is the attempt to study and report the way English speaking people do actually speak and write their language. There is a concern for every operational aspect of language with all levels of common speech as well as literary expression. Linguistic scientists do not recommend certain forms as necessarily better than others on the basis of a standard of "correctness." They do not wish to judge or prescribe but to inform and describe accurately. Their attention is directed toward the systematic patterns of the English sentence and the classification of English words according to the function in the sentence.

Thank you for the assistance you may give.

Sincerely,

Donna L. Ellison

THE EXTENT OF THE USE OF STRUCTURAL LINGUISTIC PRINCIPLES
IN THE TEACHING OF GRAMMAR

- Name _____
- Major _____ Minor _____
- Age _____ Sex _____
- No. of years teaching experience _____
- No. of pupils taught per day _____ Grades taught _____
1. Do you prefer teaching the structural grammar? yes _____ no _____
Your comments: _____

2. Do you prefer teaching the traditional grammar? yes _____ no _____
Your comments: _____

3. Do you use a combination of both? yes _____ no _____
Your comments: _____

4. How much time do you spend each day, week, or semester on the method
or methods which you use? _____

5. List the grammar texts used by your classes.
a. _____
b. _____
c. _____
6. List the references that you use for structural grammar.
a. _____
b. _____
c. _____
7. List the college courses that you have taken which explain
structural grammar. _____

8. If you have learned about structural grammar by other methods, please check.
- ☐ a. Inservice training
 - ☐ b. Institutes
 - ☐ c. Workshops
 - ☐ d. Self-study
9. Check the following statements by placing a check in the space beside the item which best describes your opinion.
- a. Structural grammar is suitable for (1) all students _____
(2) superior students _____ (3) average students _____
(4) below average students _____.
 - b. Structural grammar proves more helpful than traditional grammar in improving students' (1) writing _____ (2) speaking _____
(3) neither _____.
 - c. Structural grammar improved class morale more than did that of traditional grammar. yes _____ no _____
10. Some major traditional principles are listed. Check those which you apply in the teaching of grammar.
- ☐ a. The standard is written language.
 - ☐ b. Language change, inevitable as it is, represents degeneration.
 - ☐ c. Language changes are to be resisted vigorously.
 - ☐ d. Present rules of grammar describe English as it should be.
 - ☐ e. Usage is "right" or "wrong" and rules determine correctness.
11. Some structural linguistic principles are listed. Check those which you apply in the teaching of grammar.
- ☐ a. Language changes constantly.
 - ☐ b. Change is normal and represents improvement.
 - ☐ c. Spoken language is the language.
 - ☐ d. Correctness rests upon usage.
 - ☐ e. All usage is relative.