FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

USING STRUCTURAL LINGUISTICS
TO IMPROVE STUDENT WRITING

by

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"What about structural linguistics?" many teachers of English are asking today. "Can it help my students in their quest for acceptable writing habits any more than the tried and tested traditional grammar I've been teaching for years? If so, how?"

Let us look at some of the findings of the structural linguists. Maybe we can learn of some new approaches for helping our students become better writers. First of all, let us consider how "structural signals" play a part in determining the meaning of a sentence. According to Fries, the meaning of an utterance (sentence) is signalled by the way it contrasts with other utterances in word order, by the use of inflections (or form-class words), by the use of "function words," and by intonation (pitch and pause patterns in speaking).

**Word Order**

For instance, we react differently to each of these spoken utterances:

- He is in the cow pasture.
- Is he in the cow pasture?

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Even if the speaker uses the same intonation pattern for each of these utterances (stress on "cow," drop and fading of the voice on "pasture"), the hearer knows how to respond appropriately to each utterance: He has picked up the meaning solely by attention to word order.

**Form Classes**

But notice the distinguishing feature here:

The boys come today.

The boy comes today.

The inflections (changes in form) of "boy" and "come" let us know whether we should expect one boy or more. The ability of a word to change its form according to the work it does in the sentence makes the word a "form-class" word. For instance, a noun like "boy" changes its form to signal number (boys) or possession (boy's). A verb sometimes changes its form to signal number (come--comes). An adjective often changes its form to show comparison (small, smaller, smallest). And finally, an adverb often has a distinctive ending which distinguishes it from the adjective form of the word (quick--quickly); however, many linguists do not recognize the adverb as a form-class word. According to Roberts, there are four form classes. The words that fit in each of these classes correspond more or less to the traditional

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nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. A word is classified according to the "test pattern" it fits. For instance, all adjectives should fit into the following blanks:

The ________ (noun) is very ________.

Let us try three words in this frame:

The beautiful house is very beautiful.
The next house is very next.
The book salesman is very book.

If we follow this formula, "next" is not an adjective; neither is "book." Incidentally, neither is "the." The form classes do not correspond exactly to the traditional concept of noun, verb, adjective, and adverb.

Function Words

Not all words fit into the form classes, however. There are about two hundred words in the English language which pattern, as Roberts says, "in very special ways, quite different from the patterning of the words in the form classes." Fries refers to these two hundred words as "function words." Although the function words are few in number as compared to the thousands that comprise the form classes, the individual function words are generally used much more frequently than the individual form class words. "The," a function word, is the most commonly used word in our language.

1Ibid., p.31.
Another distinction is that function words "have no features of form to mark them in our sentences."¹

Finally, function words are often used to expand basic sentence patterns:

1. Basic patterns--form-class words arranged in a certain order:
   a. Birds sing.
   b. Birds are beautiful.
   c. Birds eat worms.²

2. (Expanded pattern--the function words are underlined)

   Most birds are not so beautiful in the moulting season as in the springtime.

The use of the function word in a sentence often is the sole means of preventing ambiguity, since a function word often signals the "part of speech" of the word following. In the following examples,

   The plan moves slowly.²
   Plan the moves slowly.²

the function word "the" serves the all-important purpose of signalling the noun. Fries³ identifies fifteen types of function words, each type fitting into a characteristic test pattern. Examples include "Group A" words, which pattern like "the":⁴

¹Ibid., p. 293.
²Ibid., p. 31.
⁴Ibid., pp. 88-89.
The concert(s) is/was good.

Function words also include such word types as the traditional verbal auxiliaries, conjunctions, prepositions, and miscellaneous individual words, such as "not."

**Intonation**

Besides the other structural signals—word order, inflections, and function words, we must consider intonation patterns. We have all experimented with the changes in meaning signalled by subtle changes in voice pitch, stress, and pause.

What's that in the road ahead?

What's that in the road—a head?

In their analysis of intonation, some linguists have decided that English has four degrees of stress, four of pitch, and four of juncture (or pause).¹ Roberts illustrates four levels of pitch by the following sentence:

"The White House is a white house.

/\ = primary, the loudest degree
/\ = secondary, the next to loudest
/\ = tertiary, the third from loudest
/\ = weak, the softest.²

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¹Some linguists, however, disagree with such a division. The bases for analysis are not standard.

The four levels of pitch can be illustrated by the following sentence, which is spoken in exasperation:

What are you doing?¹

The highest level of pitch—on "are"—is illustrated by the highest line. Finally, there are four types of juncture (a stopping or breaking of the speech flow). Here are the common symbols linguists use to designate them:

1. The plus juncture //++. This operates on a phonemic (individual sound) level, and it is shown by the distinction between "I scream" and "ice cream," shown phonemically as /ay+skriym/ and /ays+kriym/, respectively.

2. The single bar juncture //|. This often occurs after a word that has primary stress:
   The man on your right // is her brother.²

3. The double bar juncture ////. This is signalled by a rise in pitch, followed by a pause.
   Mr. Jones// digging in his garden// found a worm.³
   Is he in the cow pasture//

4. The double cross juncture //#/ This is a slight drop in pitch.
   Mr. Jones //digging in his garden/// found a worm#

¹Ibid., p. 230.
²Ibid., p. 231.
³Ibid., p. 232.
Sentence Patterns

All these devices for signalling meaning work with each other to produce a relatively few patterns. For example, suppose we read this:

The skeetious snickles were flamping bloobidly through the plurk.

The reader of this simple statement knows much more about it than he thinks he does. He feels strongly that "snickles" is a "noun," because it is signalled by "the" (function word), and is preceded by "skeetious," a good candidate for an adjective with its "ous" ending (inflection). The word "snickles" itself, with its "s" ending (inflection), is obviously a plural "noun." Notice also that the order of these three words is usual for those parts of speech. In addition, he probably feels that "snickles" is the "subject" of the sentence, because it is in a likely position to be the subject and it is followed by a word group which patterns like a "verb":

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{were} & + & \text{flamping} \\
\text{(function word)} & & \text{(inflected word)}
\end{array}
\]

Traditional grammarians have accused the structural linguists of ignoring meaning. Fries, however, says on page 8 of *The Structure of English*:

"The challenge of the conventional use of meaning as the basic tool of analysis must not lead to the conclusion that I have ignored meaning as such... It does mean, however, that in the study of sentence structure I believe certain uses of meaning constitute an unscientific procedure."
Also, the "-s" inflection on "snaickles" is tied to "were," a function word which characteristically patterns with nouns having an "-s" ending. In other words, we know who or what (skeetious snickles) are doing what (flamping) where (through the plurk). And we have gathered this information not by our knowledge of the meaning, but by our sensitivity to structural signals and to the characteristic patterns they form.

According to the structural linguist, each utterance contains a hierarchy of "immediate constituents"\(^1\) or "pattern parts."\(^2\) These parts generally occur in pairs, each member of the pair being of equal importance. Each pattern part is usually included in a more important part and is itself divisible into several smaller parts. To illustrate, here is how a structural linguist such as Roberts would tell us to divide a sentence into its immediate constituents or pattern parts:

The fat old man in the red flannel suit, who was eating apricots, viciously slammed the door with a bang.

First, as may be expected, we divide the sentence thus:

The fat old man in the red flannel suit, who was eating apricots, / viciously slammed the door with a bang.

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\(^1\)Fries, *op. cit.*, pp. 256-73.

This gives us the familiar subject-predicate pattern and indicates the largest division of immediate constituents within the sentence. In this pair of parts "man" with all its modifiers is structurally equal in importance to "slammed" with all its modifiers. (The word modified, which can be substituted for the entire group making up itself and its modifiers, is referred to as the "headword." "Suit" is the headword of the group, "the red flannel suit.")

Notice how we further divide the subject:

The fat old man in the red flannel suit /
   who was eating apricots.

"Who was eating apricots," believes the structural linguist, modifies everything that precedes it, modifiers and all. It modifies not just any man, but "the fat old man in the red flannel suit." Therefore, says the linguist, if we wish to divide a subject into its immediate constituents, we should begin with the modifier to the extreme right of the subject and work backward toward the subject.

The fat old man / in the red flannel suit

With modifiers preceding the subject, we begin with the modifier to the extreme left and work toward the subject after we have taken care of the post-modifiers discussed above.

The / fat old man
fat / old man
old / man
There we have subdivided the subject into a descending hierarchy of pairs of pattern parts.

Turning to the predicate, we find that it divides into pattern parts in much the same way as the subject:

viciously / slammed the door with a bang.

Notice however, that we begin to the extreme left of the verb and work toward the verb. Then we begin to the extreme right and work backward toward the verb.

slammed the door / with a bang
slammed / the door

We can further divide the word groups which serve as modifiers:

in / the red flannel suit
the / red flannel suit
red flannel / suit

who / was eating apricots
was / eating apricots
eating / apricots

When we analyze sentences by breaking them into their immediate constituents, we see the exact role each word plays in a sentence. We become aware then the words are not related to each other on a one-to-one linear basis.

The / old gray mare
"The" modifies "old gray mare," not merely "mare." The structural linguist believes such a method of analysis gives
the student a clearer over-all concept of sentence structure. The divisions between immediate constituents are signalled by pause and pitch patterns. Marking immediate constituents is what the linguist would substitute for the traditional exercise of sentence diagramming.

Moreover, a student does not have to study parts in order to speak effectively—-at an early age he was able to manipulate them. He can operate them, but he cannot tell how he does so. Joe, the average college freshman, can toss off automatically a complicated structure such as the following:

When I get home from class this afternoon, I'm going to play those hi-fi records I got in the mail yesterday—and then I guess I'll go to the movies afterward.

But when his English teacher asks him to write a sentence or so of homework, Joe is likely to produce such misfits as this:

The incident about picking up a green, sour apple and biting it, looking at a second apple, and seeing it green and hard, you put it down too.

Perhaps Joe can learn to avoid sentence errors of this type if he practices using immediate constituents. If he can work with pattern parts, building sentences with them as he senses the complex interrelations involved, he will gain competence in the use of the language. "But we can practice with 'pattern parts' just as well by using traditional grammar," the teacher may feel. We have seen, however, that
structural linguistics recognizes word order as an important device for signalling meaning. Structural linguistics tells us that single-word modifiers usually precede the word modified and that word-group modifiers usually follow the word modified. Therefore, if Joe has had considerable practice in building sentences with premodifiers and post-modifiers, he is likely to sense that in the following situation,

The incident about picking up a green, sour apple ... and biting it, looking at ... a second apple, and seeing it green and hard ...

the function word "about" signals a post-modifier and is similar in construction to such patterns as

The fear of losing your mind ...
The fallacy in thinking that there are only two sides to a question ...
A talent for saying the right thing at the wrong time ...

Let the student drill on post-modifiers, building sentences containing them until he is aware of their characteristic sentence positions and functions. Let him practice with them further until he can sense post-modification automatically. Then he probably will not let his post-modifier, "seeing it green and hard," become a Jekyll-and-Hyde pre-modifier, to the consternation of his reader.

Joe's experience shows us how, as Anderson states it, we can utilize our students' knowledge of the basic sentence
patterns they use in their speech. We must (1) have a system of analysis that can make as full use as possible of the students' actual "knowledge" of grammar (ability to use it in speaking); (2) have the student practice building all the commonly used variations of each pattern until he becomes consciously aware of the pattern; (3) have him drill further until he can use the pattern automatically. The "grammar" is then again beneath the level of his consciousness where it started. In this manner he has transferred to his writing at least a part of his mastery of speech.

Also, as Anderson points out, he has probably advanced in his "ability to use fully the structural signals of the standard language." Fries stated in his American English Grammar that the chief difference between standard and non-standard written English was the presence or absence of such an ability. In a comparison of Standard English with Vulgar English writing, the Vulgar English had two and a half times


2This concept of drilling until the patterns can be used automatically is advocated by Donald J. Lloyd in "Grammar in Freshman English," College Composition and Communication, V (December, 1954), 164.


4New York: Appleton-Century Co., 1946, Chapter XI.
as many short sentences (one to nine words) as did Standard English.\textsuperscript{1} Surprisingly enough, however, Vulgar English had nearly five times as many very long sentences (more than seventy words). Fries explains this phenomenon by pointing out that

... many of the Vulgar English sentences are the very brief statements of "constituents" without any representation of the different layers in which these "constituents" belong, or the very long sentences in which these "constituents" function. ... On the other hand, it is in the sentences of the Standard English materials that one finds the frequent illustrations of the kinds of structural grouping that have used fully the resources of our structural signals.\textsuperscript{2}

The less-educated writer, for example, overworks the connectors "and" and "so."\textsuperscript{3} The better-educated writer uses a variety of connectors and subordinating words.

Typical Vulgar construction: I didn't want to do it and I had to.

Likely Standard construction: Although I didn't want to do it, I had to. Or, I didn't want to do it but I had to.

Fries, however, was concerned not only with immediate constituents within the sentence; as the quotation above indicates, he regarded overly short sentences as "constituents" that should have been combined to form larger units. Consider this paragraph:

\textsuperscript{1}Fries, \textit{The Structure of English}, p. 291.

\textsuperscript{2}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 292.

\textsuperscript{3}\textit{Ibid.}
There are many reasons why it would help a person to join the army and then go to college. You are thrown in with a lot of different kinds of people. You learn to take care of yourself and not depend on your parents. It makes you learn to appreciate the comforts of life. You have to get up early and discipline your mind and body. You meet up with all kinds of situations and decide what is right and wrong for yourself. With this out of your system, you won’t “go wild” when you get to college. Therefore, army life can make a better all-around college student.

The teacher who reads this may sense vaguely that the organization leaves something to be desired, and that the sentences lack variety. The student may profit from the admonition to organize better and make his sentences more varied, but perhaps a grasp of “constituents” operating in descending layers of structure will help him more. The teacher can ask:

1. Exactly how does serving in the army prepare a person to be a good college student? List the main reasons. (These reasons are immediate constituents of the central idea of the paragraph.)

2. How do the specific examples you give, support each of these reasons? (The supporting examples are immediate constituents of the main reasons.)

The student might then decide that his main reasons were:

1. In the army a person learns to rely on himself; this makes him better able to keep a good balance between work and play.
2. In the army he has to associate with many kinds of people; this makes him better able to adjust to the people he meets at college.

3. In the army he learns to appreciate the comforts of life; this makes him more appreciative of college facilities.

At the next lower level of constituents, the student may decide that the misplaced constituent about "getting up early" is an immediate constituent of the "self-reliance" reason, just as is "not depending on your parents." (Or he may decide that "getting up early" is more closely connected to the "appreciating comforts" reason.) The important thing is that the student should see the structural levels of the paragraph and should show clearly how the constituents on a lower level (getting up early, not depending on parents) relate to constituents on a higher level (self reliance), and that in turn relates to the main purpose of the paper (army life prepares a person for college life). He then may correct his paragraph to read:

There are many ways in which serving in the army can help a person be a better college student. First of all, army life makes a person more self-reliant. His mother isn't around to get him out of bed and make it up; he has to rely on himself or face the consequences. Then too, he has to decide for himself such things as whether or not he wants to smoke and drink. Nobody is there to tell him not to. Therefore, when he gets to college, he won't have to get anything out of his system. He is more likely to settle down and study.
Army life also teaches a person to get along with all kinds of people . . .

In addition to working with constituents within paragraphs, the student may benefit from considering each paragraph as an immediate constituent of a main topic heading. Finally, of course, the main topic headings would be immediate constituents of the central idea for his paper.

The concept of immediate constituents operating on a higher level than the sentence may prove useful in teaching, but such a concept is purely hypothetical; it has serious limitations, and it has been used for years under the aegis of traditional grammar. As an example, for years books teaching effective writing have admonished students to use general statements and back up these statements with specific details. Perhaps, however, the concept of immediate constituents on a higher level than the sentence can give the student a clearer grasp of organization. Linguists call this study "discourse analysis," which, according to Henry Lee Smith, "concerns itself with further classification of relationships within the sentence and with distributional patterns of sentences and sentence fractions in actual discourse."¹ Much more remains to be learned about discourse analysis, but we will see that the first program described in Part II of this paper makes use of inter-sentence structural analysis.

¹"The Teacher and the World of English," The English Journal, XLVII (April, 1958), 188.
PART II

SOME TEACHING PROGRAMS USING STRUCTURAL LINGUISTICS

We have examined some of the possibilities for teaching inherent in the new science of structural linguistics; now let us see what has actually been done in adapting the linguists' findings to the teaching situation. In the October, 1954, issue of College English, MacCurdy Burnet describes an interesting-sounding program used at the Maryland State Teachers College. The material for instruction is based mainly on Fries' Structure of English. This program is one of the few to utilize Fries' suggestion that the student analyze structural signals showing interrelationships between sentences. Burnet believes that his students benefit greatly by "tracking structures' through stretches of prose longer than the sentence."  

As his students enter the class, they may see on the board a diagram such as the following:

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2 Ibid., p. 38.
Poebly is baloque.

Baloque is trallic, mappive, and murtical.

It is epermental.

It desands dopth and iksight.

I cannot but feel that the close frillers of the baloque derion...

The students do not know what "baloque" is, says Burnet, but they can "make certain statements" about it. The passage has "certain built-in signals of meaning" that let the reader know how other words relate to "baloque." Burnet states further that "recurring similar words like 'baloque' occur in... about nineteen out of twenty adjacent printed sentences. Their recurrences constitute 'links' of a sort, between sentences." Student writing, however, is deficient in such "linking" devices. Burnet reports a ratio of eight subject-links in print to three subject-links in freshman themes. Students can profit, therefore, by collecting and analyzing printed material that interests them.

The "step format" in the diagram above "shows positional relations of 'blocks of structures' which occur

1Ibid.
2Ibid., p. 39.
over and over again in printed sentences.\textsuperscript{1} These blocks of structure are what actually make up the sentence--"words are relatively incidental,"\textsuperscript{1} states Burnet. The nonsense words (all form-class words) force the student to look at meaning "in terms of their contrasts in form,"\textsuperscript{2} not in terms of clues given by lexical meaning. Later, the students consider the original passage from which the nonsense diagram was taken, and they gain a few more clues from lexical meaning. According to Burnet, the students can easily "transcribe" sentences into the form outlined above. An indented format is used, with the first line representing the subject structure, the second line the verb structure, and the third line the complement structure. The student removes the words that can be erased with a minimum of damage to sentence meaning. As he does this, he draws arrows showing the direction of modification.

\textbf{The uggle to the norp}
\textbf{uffly wogs}
\textbf{a seckly diggle of nerbal facks.}

1. The uggle
    \textbf{wogs a diggle.}

The sentence form diagrammed above occurs more frequently than does any other form. The three next most popular ones all have a "to be" verb:

\textsuperscript{1}\textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{2}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 40.
2. A diggle is wogged by the uggle.  
(Note "ed" form.)

3. The uggle is a vemp.  
(Note the "a" and the lack of a suffix on "vemp").

4. The uggle is vemper.  
(Note the lack of "a" and the presence of a suffix.)

The meanings of the subjects in the four sentences above follow Fries' classification of subject meanings: That which (1) performs; (2) undergoes; (3) is identified; (4) is described. Burnet provides diagrams for seven other sentence forms, including virtually all forms that the students will find in their analyses.

As the students lay out their sentences they will discover in the adjacent blocks of structure many "sames" that give greater coherence to the passage. For example, let us look at the English of an excerpt from the "baloque" passage:

For
12p to write good prose
is an affair of good manners.  

13 It is, unlike verse, a civil art.

14 Poetry is baroque.

1Ibid.
Poetry is baroque.

Baroque is tragic, massive, and mystical.

It is elemental.

Here, the nounforms or structures which could be shifted from one sentence to an adjacent one are underlined, and the underlined "sames" connected by lines. When these connecting lines cross separating sentences, we call the connecting lines hypothetical links between sentences.

Other structural "sames" which the student might notice are that sentence 12p, a paragraph opener (as indicated by the "p"), is the only sentence with a whole-sentence modifier. Also, adjacent sentences often have the same structural meaning (12-13, identified; 15-16, described). Sentences 12-16 have the same "verbform," and sentences 15-16 end with the same two letters. Burnet gives a succinct statement about the theory behind such analysis when he says that

similarities like these, since they occur frequently in adjacent sentences, probably constitute a kind of rhetorical "glue" which binds sentences together. If so, they furnish a suggestive starting point for a grammar which goes

1Ibid.

2Ibid., pp. 42-43.
beyond the borders of the sentence—a descriptive rhetoric which might help students in composition courses to write papers that more people want to read.1

Burnet's program is certainly worthy of consideration, although it very probably does not achieve the phenomenal results he claims for it. "Shortly after the two-week structural survey," he says, "structural trouble, storable in technical terms, all but disappears from student writing."2 Burnet wisely labels the concept of links between sentences as "hypothetical," and some critics may accuse him of forcing rhetoric into a grammatical mold. His program, however, is coherently outlined and, I believe, worthy of further experimentation.

Donald J. Lloyd3 briefly describes another program which adapts the findings of the structural linguists to the teaching situation. First, in outlining the theory behind his program, he discusses the structural devices for signalling meaning. As an example, he shows that function words often begin word groups and warn the reader or listener about "the characteristic span of the groups."4 Specifically, "who, which, that, where, or when following a noun tell us to take the next span of words as a modifier of this noun."4 It

1Ibid., p. 43.
2Ibid.
4Ibid., p. 164.
is important that the student see that the recurrence of function words "is of the same pervasive kind as the recurrences of inflections and word-order patterns, and has the same effect." The uses of "function words" have of course been taught in traditional grammar. Lloyd continues by discussing his theory, mentioned previously in this paper, that the teacher must help the student become consciously aware of the grammatical signals he uses unconsciously. Then, by drill, the student should gain an automatic mastery of the signals in his writing.

As Lloyd works with college freshmen in remedial composition classes, he finds that both their writing and their reading improve. He builds his teaching upon the structure of speech, for, he believes, a good reader is one who "can reconstruct from what he reads the patterns of pitch, stress, and pause normal to English speech." (We may assume that a good writer can let these patterns guide him in his writing.) Lloyd describes his program thus:

I give my freshmen five weeks of linguistic grammar, enforced by oral drill. I have them read aloud a good deal, sometimes phrase by phrase after me, sometimes in chorus. I teach them how to use their eyes in reading, in large jumps, according to the patterns we have drilled. I keep them writing constantly also.

In this way Lloyd helps his students to use their innate knowledge of "grammar" to improve their reading.

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1Ibid., p. 165.
2Ibid., pp. 165-66.
and writing concurrently. Here is one instance, at least, in which the teacher attempts to teach the conscious recognition of speech signals to students who are deficient in their ability to hear these signals. Persons who criticize the teaching of intonation patterns argue that intonation is a tricky business and needs a skilled teacher and that, furthermore, the only students who can really understand the material do not need the instruction anyway. Lloyd, however (highly skilled, to be sure), urges that progress along these lines can be made by retarded students.

A completely different situation for the use of linguistic principles in teaching is reported by D. E. Moulton of Bowling Green State University in Ohio. In his article "Grammar for Future Teachers of English," Moulton describes a successful teacher-training course in which the students learn about the "linguistic principle that English uses certain devices to signal grammatical meanings." The principles are taught by a combination of induction and deduction. Moulton employs devices such as the use of nonsense sentences to show the importance of word order. Throughout the course he makes sentences, not nomenclature, the basis of study. After covering the main principles, he has the students write papers to test their understanding of sentence structure.

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2Ibid., p. 32.
3Ibid., p. 36.
We can assume that the writing of these student teachers improves during the process, although such improvement is not a major purpose of the course and is not mentioned by Moulton.

We have considered three programs that follow closely the analyses of such works as Fries' *Structure of English* or Roberts' *Patterns of English*. Several other programs, however, consist of a free adaptation of the material covered in such books. For instance, Jackie Mallis,¹ a high school teacher, found it advisable to simplify the material. She says, after describing her procedure, that

... both Charles Fries and Paul Roberts would probably howl with anxiety over the reduction of their elegant formulas to such simplicities as n+v+n or adj+n+v+adv! A far cry this method from their scientific categories of form classes, intensifiers, noun clusters, structure groups, functional words, determiners, etc. But to them goes credit for the emphasis on grammar study as basic patterns of communication. Maybe if we could start this very elementary patterning at the junior high, or, at the latest, the freshman level, our seniors would be ready for such complexities as:

\[
D V 3 \quad 1a \quad P \quad D \quad 1b \quad 2D \quad 3 \quad 1c \quad P \quad D \quad 1d \quad 1e \quad D \quad 1f
\]

or

\[
D \quad 1a \quad S \quad 2 \quad 1b \quad D \quad 1c \quad 2 \quad 4 \quad S \quad D \quad 1d \quad P \quad D \quad 3 \quad 1e \quad 2 \quad 4
\]

(from Paul Roberts' *Patterns of English!*²)

When Jackie Mallis began her program, she "decided to try the patterns method" in order to help slower students


²Ibid., p. 427.
in her senior class over the psychological hurdle of the "grammar semester," to review fundamentals for "forgetters," and to challenge superior students by using a fresh approach to familiar material.\(^1\) On the first day of this unit the class discussed how a baby learns to express himself—first by nouns, then verbs, then pronouns. The class then experimented with simple sentences consisting of the minimum essentials, such as \((n+v)\)—noun and verb; \((p+v)\)—pronoun and verb; \((n+v+n)\)—noun-verb-noun (Birds sing songs); and the variations of compound subjects, verbs and objects \((n+n+v+v)\)—Birds and people sing and fly.\(^1\) The class spent fifteen minutes per day on such grammar study, and at the end of the week, they wrote five-sentence paragraphs on nature. To the surprise of the class, several of the paragraphs were "imaginative and intriguing." The class spent a fruitful period in analyzing the differences between the superior paragraphs and the poor or average paragraphs. The good paragraphs had a story value, "originality in subjects, discriminating word choice, variety in patterns."\(^2\) Next the class analyzed the purposes of voice and tense, rewriting the same thought in various ways "to see how the meaning changed with changes in voice and tense."\(^2\)

\(^{1}\)Ibid., p. 425.

\(^{2}\)Ibid., p. 426.
New parts of speech were added gradually as the class considered new patterns. "Each part of speech . . . was stressed in terms of what it enabled the writer to say."¹ In order to learn the varied functions of "adjectives," the class listed words that were determiners (such as a, the, this, these, our, their—words which determine number, relationship or possession), that expressed condition (broken, clean), were physical properties (pink, fat), or were quantities (several, five).¹ This procedure helped the class to see, as Fries and Roberts insist, that the functions described by the traditional terms "adjective" are varied indeed. The addition of prepositions and conjunctions, delayed until the simple patterns were understood, opened up the complexities and possibilities in the patterns of modification. Finally, the class utilized its understanding of parts of speech to analyze nonsense sentences. They found that structural signals enabled them to "get meaning" (although there were few clues to lexical meaning).²

Evaluating the program, Mallis reports that the use of patterns diagrammed by simple formulas intrigued superior students, and at the same time provided the slower with "a simple framework within which to develop a complete thought."³

¹Ibid.
²Ibid., p. 427.
³Ibid.
This program, of course, does use material and procedures which could be employed by a teacher orientated to traditional grammar. I believe, however, that the attention to the word-order "patterns" and the use of nonsense syllables, devices characteristic of the new grammar, were worthy additions.

The "sentence pattern method" is handled in a different manner by John J. Senatore of the Florence High School, Florence, Colorado. He reports success in using the method with all levels of English students in secondary school. This sentence pattern method, he states, "is a system of sentence-study." He continues,

This sentence-study is based on the premise that as people use language they develop habits of talking and writing, patterns of word order to communicate. By studying the current dominant patterns or habits of the used language, we may learn how the language works so that we may better use it to get what we need and what we want.

After helping his students define the "sentence," Senatore introduced gradually seven "facts" that covered all the major sentence patterns. Here are the facts, with a brief explanation of how they are used:

"Fact One: Every sentence is made up of basic parts (things it must have to be a sentence) and words that work with these basic parts." This fact is a generalization that includes all the other facts about the basic patterns of

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2Ibid.
English sentences. Students continued to find the S and V, and they were given exercises so that they could become aware of a two-fold division: (1) the two basic sentence parts and (2) the other words in a sentence that work with these basic parts. An understanding of this division is paramount, states Senatore. (This is, I believe, a simplified approach to understanding immediate constituents—the student had to realize that the S and V are more important elements than the various modifiers, signalling words, or connectors.)

"Fact Two: S V O: what these symbols mean, their order, their jobs." Using a deductive approach, Senatore stated that the three popular sentence patterns used in English today are the S-V Sentence Pattern (John runs. John is.); the S-V-C Sentence Pattern (John is the boy. the book is blue.); and the S-V-O Sentence Pattern (John hit the ball.). The students practiced with "oral and written variations of these patterns." Situations for teaching punctuation arose naturally, as when the students considered compound elements in sentences such as "John, Mary, and Jack picked, washed, and ate plums, peaches, and grapes."  

"Fact Three: All words that work with the basic parts work as single words or as a joined-group-of-words." Students were introduced to the signal-words, which warn the reader or

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1Ibid.
2Ibid., p. 422.
listener "that a group-of-words is used as a unit-of-thought."¹ Then the students found the answer to the question "How will we know what basic part the word or group of words works with or modifies?"¹ "You will know in two ways," suggested Senatore: "(1) by the place or position that word or group-of-words takes in the sentence, and (2) by the relationship shown by the word or group-of-words to the word and/or that basic part or, in other words, the lexical meaning of the modifier or connector."¹ The students practiced discovering word-order principles such as the fact that single words that work with the S or O generally come before the S or O, and that word groups come after the S or O. Here we see the heretofore-neglected principles of word order being used to supplement lexical meaning as an approach to sentence analysis.

"Fact Four: The 1 [adjectival or adverbial prepositional phrase]: what it is, does, and its places in a sentence."¹ This was the first of the facts taking up the specific "groups-of-words that work with the S, the V, and the O--the basic parts."¹ Students learned the 1-signal-words (prepositions, as listed in their texts) and practiced writing sentences to fit sentence patterns such as S-V-O: "The boy hit the ball with the torn cover."² Students found that ambiguity was difficult to avoid: "The man drove the

¹Ibid., p. 422.
²Ibid., p. 423.
car in the backyard.' (Does 'in the backyard' tell where he drove the car, or which car he drive, or both, or neither?)

"Fact Five: The present participle or the participial phrase: what it is, does, and its places in a sentence." The students were shown the present participial form of "verbs" in their texts, and they practiced with such patterns as $S_2V0$: "The man running the machine was given a raise."

"Fact Six: The past participle: What it is, does, and its places in a sentence." Students worked with exercises and cumulative variations of sentence patterns.

"Fact Seven: The small svo clause: what it is, does, and its places in a sentence." The class studied signal-words that signal a small svo group working with the S and/or the O, and then signal words that work with the V. Identification exercises and oral and written assignments followed the general procedure used for studying 1's, 2's, and 3's.

Senatore lists seven advantages of the system he has outlined (he seems to have a penchant for the figure seven):

First, this sentence pattern method reduces the number of grammatical terms a student must use from more than seventy Latin terms to less than fifteen arbitrary symbols or terms. Second, this method makes the student use the terms and the thought-unit the term symbolizes.

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1Ibid.

2Ibid., p. 424.
while he is learning. Third, this system allows teachers to change basic skills more quickly and to move on with reading, writing, speaking and listening with these skills. Fourth, this method, though not perfected, shows what happens in the English used today more accurately and effectively than any other system the writer knows. Fifth, punctuation must be taught simultaneously with sentence meaning. Sixth, no special text is needed; any written or spoken material may be used. Seventh, three years of use verify consistently one fact: Students report that this method is the clearest way given them of showing English sentence syntax and patterns.¹

Again, Senatore’s program contains much material and methodology used by a good traditional teacher. He does pay more attention to word order than is usual, however, and he emphasizes patterns more than the usual traditional teacher would be inclined to do.

The final program we shall consider is one reported on by Byron Guyer, who has used it in his freshman English classes and with students in teacher training. After demonstrating how he interweaves the study of semantics with the study of descriptive English usage, he mentions a few devices introduced by the structural linguists. First, the use of nonsense words helps his students to “discover new facts about the behavior of their language and [to] bring to consciousness facts learned long ago so well they have been dropped into forgetfulness.”²

¹Ibid.

Secondly, Guyer uses contrasting intonation patterns with the same words to show how intonation signals meaning. He advocates that the teacher use the notations of Roberts in *Patterns of English* or of Lloyd and Warfel in their *American English in its Cultural Setting*. These notations, says Guyer, "are a necessary tool for understanding language." Finally, Guyer reports the successful use of pattern-part practice. He states that "students develop better control of language when they practice constantly with these patterns." He combines this sentence-pattern study with such concepts as oversimplification. He states that "the students might begin with the skeletal simplicity and the semantic oversimplification of:

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Professors act absentmindedly.2
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A student can make the following changes:

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Adv. clause ........................................
When a professor is deeply engaged in an absorbing problem,
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he may sometimes act as if he does not notice matters less important than his program.2
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Guyer gives an enthusiastic evaluation of the system:

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1Donald A. Lloyd and Harry R. Warfel (New York: Knopf, 1956).

With plenty of practice through all the patterns, most students improve a great deal in fluency, and even the sorriest make surprising improvement, and most students also improve in precision and fullness of thought.\footnote{Ibid.}

We have considered a few teaching programs that have at least one thing in common— they all make use, at least indirectly, of the findings of the structural linguists. They all emphasize the importance of teaching the common sentence patterns (or immediate constituents) to help the student develop his writing ability. The reader may feel, however, that these programs show nothing new under the sun— that the subject matter and methods are the same as those traditional grammarians use, with a few strange terms substituted for familiar terms. We shall consider later whether or not structural linguistics actually adds anything new.

Now let us approach this study from a different angle and see how the findings of the structural linguists can be applied to some specific writing problems, and how specific areas of the findings can be utilized.
PART III

USING STRUCTURAL LINGUISTICS
TO AID SPECIFIC WRITING PROBLEMS

How can structural linguistics help our students overcome specific writing problems? For the purpose of our discussion, let us divide structural troubles into three areas—problems of sentence recognition, other grammatical problems, and problems of punctuation.

Problems of Sentence Recognition

First we shall consider one of the most serious problems that students have in their writing—the problem of sentence recognition. Many students, in spite of years of "grammar study," blithely use sentence fragments without the slightest suspicion that they are doing so. Again, the same students (or sometimes different students) "know not the stop," committing errors commonly known as comma faults or comma splices; and run-on sentences, run-together sentences, or fused sentences.

One of the most popular traditional methods of attempting to improve sentence recognition is the teaching that "a sentence is a word or group of words that expresses
a complete thought." But as Rich¹ has pointed out, the
following utterances express essentially the same "thought":

The dog is barking.
The barking dog.²

Also, the "past participle" is likely to give trouble:

The mouse was caught in a trap.
The mouse caught in a trap.

Sumner Ives³ and L. M. Myers⁴ stress in their
articles that each sentence must have a finite verb, and as
Myers states, "a finite verb [is] ... one which is not
simply a participle or an infinitive."⁵ Therefore, a student
who writes a "fragment" such as the second sentence in the
following example may profit from the study of what a finite
verb is:

We got to West Palm Beach about 4:00. Our bus
having left very early that morning.

To learn what a finite verb is, the student may also have to
learn what one is not. If he practices working with verbals,

¹Elaine Sommers Rich, "How Shall We Think About
Grammar in the Basic Course?" College English, XVI (February,
1955), 307-08.

²Ibid., p. 207.

³"Linguistics in the Classroom," College English,
XVII (December, 1955), 165-72.

⁴"Linguistics and the Teaching of Rhetoric," College
Composition and Communication, V (December, 1954), 166-71.

⁵Ibid., p. 170.
he may gain the concept that the verbal or verbal phrase serves as a modifier or as a "noun," not as a verb that can stand alone in a sentence. Here is how structural linguistics can help the student see the characteristics and functions of the verbal or verbal phrase: The student can drill on the positions verbals generally take when they modify or when they serve as a "noun" (in one of the "positions" commonly occupied by the subject or the various verb complements). Conlin\(^1\) shows some sentences that illustrate the constrasting positions taken by the verb and by the verbal, respectively:

The man was working on the railroad.

The man working on the railroad was strong.\(^2\)

Conlin continues that sometimes, however, the verbal seems to occupy the verb position:

The man likes working on the railroad.\(^2\)

In this example, the verb "likes" is not a form of the verb "to be." In such an instance the student "can substitute such words as apples, books, meals, etc. for working."\(^2\) The student applies a test pattern to discover whether or not the word under consideration is part of the finite verb.

Also, the student can drill on finite verb forms. He can study the main sentence patterns such as S-V, S-V-C and

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\(^1\)David A. Conlin, "Can Traditional Grammar Be Modernized?" The English Journal, XLVII (April, 1958), pp. 189-94.

\(^2\)Ibid., p. 193.
S-V-O (or any other scheme the teacher may adopt, such as:

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\text{noun}_1 + \text{verb} + \text{noun}_2 + \text{noun}_3
\]

as the four basic sentence positions). As he works with these patterns he should learn the characteristic position of the verb, and he should note the contrasts in form between the "subject" and the verb:

The boys come.

The boy comes.

As the student gains awareness of the differences between a verbal and a finite verb, he will also of course have to distinguish between the traditional "dependent clause" and the sentence, or, as Fries labels them, the "included sentence" and the "free utterance," respectively. Roberts states that much trouble in sentence recognition grows from the tendency of students to confuse the functions of subordinators (subordinating conjunctions), conjunctions (coordinating conjunctions), and sentence connectors (conjunctive adverbs). ¹ Confusion about the function of subordinators may cause the student to write fragments. Confusion about conjunctions and sentence connectors may cause the student to write run-on sentences or comma splices. Therefore, if the student becomes familiar with these three types of connectors, his sentence sense is almost certain to improve.

Traditional grammarians have, of course, taught about the connectors, but the structural linguist offers some approaches to the problem that have not been emphasized previously. Paul Roberts, for instance, points out that the three connectors contrast in both position within the sentence and in intonation patterns.¹

A conjunction, he says, patterns like and, and it has two characteristic positions in the sentence. First, it can stand between parts of sentence patterns. Alice and Jerry skipped down the road. Secondly, it can stand between whole sentence patterns.²

Alice skipped down the road and Jerry skipped rope.

A sentence connector patterns like therefore. It joins two whole sentence patterns, and it occurs (1) at the beginning of the second pattern in a sentence, (2) inside the second pattern, or (3) at the end of the second pattern:³

The party was over; therefore, we left.
The party was over; we therefore left.
The party was over; we didn’t leave, however.

There are two types of subordinators. The first type patterns like who, which, that. The second type, which is often confused with the other connectors, patterns like because. Says Roberts, "subordinators stand at the head of a sentence pattern and make that pattern a part of another

¹Ibid.
²Roberts, Patterns of English, p. 218.
³Ibid., p. 219.
pattern. The subordinated pattern can come either before the pattern of after it: 

Because the day was warm, we went to Alligator Point. We went to Alligator Point because the day was warm. 

The best way to gain a mastery of these patterns, states Roberts, is to understand the contrasts between positions, and drill on the usual punctuation used with each of these connectors. 

Summer Ives believes that students will improve in the ability to recognize sentences if they understand the following: 

(1) Each sentence "must contain at least one finite verb," all words in the sentence "must be structurally related," and the sentence must not "have a grammatical function in a larger construction." 

(2) There are five types of "sentences," or word units "marked by end punctuation or intonation." These are the statement, the question, the request, the response, and the exclamation. Each type has characteristic patterns which must be learned. We are all familiar with the traditional classification of "declarative," "interrogative," "imperative," and "exclamatory" sentences, with the teacher's 

1Ibid. 
2Ibid., p. 220. 
4Ibid., p. 172.
observation that a declarative statement "goes down at the end" and the interrogative statement "goes up" (incidentally, it doesn't necessarily go up--where are you going?). But the structuralists have provided one or two fresh approaches to the analysis of sentence types. Instead of defining an interrogative sentence in terms of meaning--"a sentence that asks a question"--the structuralist defines a question sentence by pointing out that (1) it normally stimulates an oral response from the listener; (2) it utilizes certain function words (Did you go?), (3) the function class and form class words occupy characteristic positions, and (4) the question sentence conforms to a characteristic intonation pattern, depending on the presence or absence of interrogative function words:

What are you doing?

He's coming tomorrow?

(3) There are various devices for marking the juxtapositions between sentences. These must be learned.¹

(4) "At the beginning of a sentence, structural relationship points forward; at the end it points backward. If the student reads what he has written, aloud and phrase by phrase, he can detect the point where there is a break, where the shift from backward to forward relationship occurs."¹

¹Ibid., p. 172.
The student can work with number (4) above as he builds sentences using subordinators, sentence connectors, and conjunctions in their various positions. He can analyze material such as the following, taking particular note of the direction of modification:

When duty calls free man must answer when pleasure calls all men usually answer after all we only live once.

When duty calls free men must answer when pleasure calls all men usually answer after all we only live once.

When duty calls, free men must answer. When pleasure calls, all men usually answer. After all, we only live once.

Ives also mentions that native speakers can sense grammatical relationship even when they cannot analyze or name the relationship. Roberts believes that the student will benefit from the use of formulas or nonsense syllables, where lexical meaning is stripped away and only structural meaning is left. "Nothing else seems to work so well in building pattern sense and sentence sense," believes Roberts.

Hunt gives some practical applications for using nonsense sentences and blanks to point up structural relationships. We as teachers have repeatedly experienced the

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1Teacher's Guide to Patterns of English, p. 12.

2Kellogg W. Hunt, "Improving Sentence Structure," The English Journal, XLVII (April, 1958), pp. 206-11. Although this discussion could be included more appropriately, perhaps, under the following section, the procedures outlined here do help students to recognize sentences.
bother of having to reread a student's sentence to get the meaning he intended. If we point out his structural error to him, he may feel, "You know what I meant, but you're just being fussy."\(^1\)

To remedy such a situation, we can show our class a sentence with blanks:

We talked from _______ to _______.\(^2\)

Our students will readily supply words such as "dawn" and "dusk," "morn" and "midnight," or "five" and "nine." They will, however, sense that the following is structurally wrong:

We talked from religion to politics.\(^3\)

Having the students complete a sentence can help them see that structural signals have led the reader astray:

Dating in America is a routine followed by each teen-ager that seems to be . . . \(^4\)

Our students complete the sentence with such structures as "normal" or "able to afford it."\(^3\) Students are unprepared, however, for the ending "seems to be a good idea."\(^3\)

Also, nonsense syllables can be used to replace form-class words. "Under certain circumstances," says Hunt, "students can see structure more clearly when all lexical meaning has been removed from an expression."\(^5\)

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 207.  
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 206.  
\(^3\)Ibid., p. 207.  
\(^4\)Ibid., p. 208.  
\(^5\)Ibid., p. 209.
Consider the following sentence:

Puffing and panting, the womble was woobled at last.¹

If students are asked to substitute real words for the nonsense syllables, they will call the "womble" a dog, or some other thing that can puff and pant. They will reject the following when it is presented to them:

Puffing and panting, the top of the hill was reached at last.²

For examples relating to sentence recognition, Hunt lets the students work with the following:

In years later after the foons womped it.²

No one said that they were beekish fortunately the bol serped upon the woofing gulp of the bok then I woked it out.²

Students sense immediately that the first example is not a sentence and that the second example contains more than one sentence.

Hunt goes on to show how students can gain insights into the structural ambiguities possible in squinting modifiers, the mispunctuation of coordinating conjunctions, structures that are not parallel, pronoun reference, modifiers that modify the wrong word, and other faults. By analyzing nonsense syllables and filling in blanks, the students can gain greater awareness of how structural meaning must work with lexical meaning, not against it.

¹Ibid., p. 209.
²Ibid.
What about intonation? In the utterances above, "meaning" will be ambiguous until the reader finishes the sentence unless the sentence is read aloud with the proper intonation. Intonation certainly plays an important part in sentence recognition, but often teachers think it impractical to teach intonation. After all, intonation is a very difficult thing to understand (perhaps even for the teacher); the teacher may feel that the only students who will benefit from the study of it are those who know about it anyway. Maybe students who are unable to "hear" sentences as they read and write them will find the study of intonation difficult; but usually students who are the weakest in the use of word order, function words, and inflections find the study of these elements quite difficult also. I believe that we must use every available approach to the problem of developing our students' sentence sense.

Whitehall¹ states that the ability to recognize a sentence relates closely to the understanding of intonation patterns. He says that

> English sentences are not sentences by virtue of the kinds of constructions they embody or the kinds of words they contain; they are sentences because they possess one or other of the final tone-pause patterns characteristic of the language.²


²Ibid., p. 34.
We recognize transition from one sentence to another, states Whitehall, by the following distinctive features: "(1) prolongation of the last speech-sounds of a statement: (2) gradual voice fade, or, alternatively, abrupt voice cutoff; and (3) significant change in the tone of the voice."¹ If we learn to recognize the characteristic tone changes and pause patterns that mark the end of a sentence, we will be able to recognize a sentence, believes Whitehall.

There are a very few tone patterns that mark the end of an English sentence, Whitehall points out. The most common is "a sharp fall from [a high tone] ... to the low tone of the voice."² This tone pattern is used with (1) single words "or the last stressed word of any word-group used as a sentence of a declarative nature,"² and (2) with "a single interrogative word or [with] ... the last stressed word of a question introduced by an interrogative word."³ Examples of the high-low tone pattern (h_1) are as follows:

(1) Declarative utterances
   (a) Single word: Home.
   (b) Word group: I'm going home.

(2) Interrogative utterances
   (a) Single word: Where?
   (b) Word group: Where is the fan?

¹Ibid., p. 29.
²Ibid., p. 32.
³Ibid., p. 33.
A second common tone pattern "involves rising higher tone (usually h>h) commencing on the last stressed syllable of a sentence."\(^1\) This tone pattern is used with "questions not introduced by interrogative words."\(^2\)

There are fifteen minutes left?

The pattern is also used with questions introduced by interrogative words when the listener signals surprise or a call for repetition.

\begin{verbatim}
What? Why was the squirrel in the chimney?
\end{verbatim}

Finally, the pattern is used in series statements:

\begin{verbatim}
One, and two, and three, and four, and five.\(^3\)
\end{verbatim}

The third common tone pattern is more difficult to hear than the two preceding. It involves a rise in tone from normal to high and back to normal, and it occurs within the sentence, never at the end.

\begin{verbatim}
Going down the river, I saw Cairo on the right.\(^4\)
\end{verbatim}

Whitehall believes that the ability to recognize the three common tone patterns is relatively easy to learn. He says that "very little practice is needed to discriminate the final high rising tone pattern from the final high-low tone pattern or either from the internal level tone-pause pattern."\(^5\)

\begin{verbatim}
\(^{1}\text{Ibid.}, p. 33.}\)
\(^{2}\text{Ibid.}\)
\(^{3}\text{Ibid.}, p. 34.}\)
\(^{4}\text{Ibid.}, pp. 34-35.}\)
\end{verbatim}
Also, he states that since the sentence characterized by a high-low ending is most common, "the first step toward comprehension of sentences is to recognize it unerringly."

We can question Whitehall's implication that nearly everyone can master the understanding of intonation patterns, but in my opinion, the teaching of tone-pause patterns can be a valuable supplement to the other methods of teaching sentence sense. Hatfield reports success in teaching sentence sense to elementary students by making use of the pitch-pause concept. He urges his students to hear mentally the sentences they write, and he drills them on oral composition. Some students, he finds, have to have much practice in distinguishing between comma pauses (short with sustained or rising pitch) and sentence pauses (longer, commonly with falling pitch).

We have seen that there are several approaches to the problem of teaching sentence sense. We can teach what a finite verb is by having the students learn contrasting sentence positions and formal contrasts of the finite verbs and the verbals. Structural linguistics contributes a few new approaches for distinguishing finite verbs. Secondly, we can put heavy emphasis on the joining words that give

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1Ibid., p. 35.
3Ibid., p. 272.
trouble, such as conjunctions, sentence connectors, and subordinators, as Roberts labels them. We can make the student familiar with the most common sentence patterns, such as S-V, S-V-C, and S-V-O. We can have him work with nonsense syllables so that he will see structural relationships clearly. Finally, we can work with intonation patterns. Many of these procedures have been used by traditional grammarians, but structural linguistics provides several supplementary means of teaching sentence sense.

Other Grammatical Problems

Our students have trouble not only with sentence recognition; they also have other grammatical problems. Let us look briefly at a few suggestions for remedying these problems.

One of the most obvious structural problems a student encounters is that of the misrelated modifier. The misrelated modifier is, of course, often structurally equivalent to "howlers" such as "Standing on my tiptoes, a horse could be seen." But often the modification problem is more subtle: "Samuel Pepys wrote about sores in his diary." If the student experiments with modifiers, building sentences with them according to a formula, he will soon notice the possibilities for misrelating them. Then he will profit from observing and experimenting with the various positions
certain sequence signals connecting it with what has gone before). In the following set, the sequence signal is ambiguous:

(Situation sentence)  
The police have just brought in a man, and his wife, and three children.

(Sequence sentence)  
They are in bad condition.¹

If students work with sentences of this type, noting the differences between situation sentences and sequence sentences, they may gain a clearer understanding of how to handle pronoun reference. Incidentally, if the student studies the "response utterance" along with the two other types of utterances, he may increase his sentence-recognition ability. He will learn that often the answer to a question does not pattern like what his teacher considers a complete sentence.

(Situation sentence)  
Why aren't you coming?  
(Sequence sentence)  
Because my hair's still up.

Problems of Punctuation  
We have touched briefly on some problems of grammatical relationships in order to show how structural linguistics may be used to help students overcome these problems. Let us consider finally the problem of punctuation,

¹Ibid., p. 243.
which of course can hardly be separated from what we have discussed before.

Wallace Anderson believes that "intonation patterns can be useful . . . in dealing with some specific problems of punctuation, . . . even though there is not complete accord between our intonation system and our punctuation system."\(^1\) In order to use intonation patterns to teach punctuation, he states, we must teach the difference between a completion pattern and a continuation pattern.\(^2\) The following shows how the symbols for juncture, discussed in Part I, can be applied to problems of punctuation. The completion pattern is the double cross juncture \(/\#\)/, which goes along with Whitehall's high-low final tone-pause pattern. In contrast to this are the two junctures of continuation. The first, "called single bar juncture \(/\i\)/, signals continuation and close connection."\(^3\) The second, "called double bar juncture \(/\ii\)/, is characterized by . . . a rapid, short rise in pitch and fairly sharp cut off of volume."\(^3\) Anderson warns that our punctuation system does not correspond exactly with our intonation system, but that in certain instances juncture signals are a reliable guide to punctuation.\(^3\)

Taking up the junctures that affect punctuation, Anderson

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 416.
\(^3\) Ibid., p. 417.
states that "the single bar juncture signals close connection; it is the sign of a thruway. Most of the time no punctuation is required." ¹

We saw the man who had moved in!

"The double bar juncture, on the other hand, signals loose connection... It warns us of interruptions and syntactic detours. Most of the time we use the comma..." ¹

We saw Mr. Jones who just moved in!

The contrast between single bar junctures and double bar junctures is shown clearly in the way we punctuate restrictive and non-restrictive elements, as is illustrated above. Also, the contrast is reflected in the punctuation of participial phrases.²

The man looking out the window lost his hat!

Bill Jones looking out the window lost his hat!

Finally, the double bar juncture is found with transitional elements such as "however," "non-restrictive" appositives, and with a series.³

If the student works with intonation patterns, he may develop in his ability to punctuate at the same time he improves his sentence sense. This approach is limited, of course, for some students are virtually unable to "hear" intonation patterns. We need much more experimentation in teaching intonation to improve student writing.

¹Ibid., p. 417.
²Ibid., p. 418.
³Ibid.
PART IV

IS STRUCTURAL LINGUISTICS USEFUL?

In this paper we have examined many attempts to apply structural linguistics to the teaching of writing. We have also examined suggestions that have not yet been tried in actual teaching situations, and we have indicated areas in which further experimentation is necessary. We cannot, however, give a conclusive answer to the question, "Can we use structural linguistics to improve our students' writing?" At this point in the development of structural linguistics it is too early to make any conclusive statements about the value of this new field of study as it relates to teaching composition. Five years from now, will structural linguistics have gained greater recognition among English teachers? Or will it have died away, a fad? Probably it will not die out, since it is based upon a more accurate description of our language than is traditional grammar.

As for the teaching techniques presented in this paper, we can give only a subjective evaluation. It would seem that much of the methodology and subject matter advocated by the structural linguists has been used effectively
for years by traditional teachers. Several very helpful supplementary features can be noted in the new grammar, however. The attention to word order provides new means of helping students write clearer, more powerful sentences. The test pattern method provides more objective definitions for the parts of speech. Devices for showing structural meaning divorced from lexical meaning may give students a clearer concept of structure. Greater attention to intonation patterns may help some students who have not consciously equated these patterns with reading or punctuation. Finally, perhaps the new methods of grammatical analysis are closer to the language-as-it-is, and thus will help the students to transfer their innate knowledge of spoken grammar to their writing.

Whatever the future of structural linguistics may be, it is safe to say that the teacher of English will profit from making himself familiar with the basic principles of structural linguistics.¹

¹A very pleasant-to-read introduction to the subject is Paul Roberts' Patterns of English (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1956).
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