THE RELATIONSHIP OF SPECIFIC BACKGROUND FACTORS UPON ENGLISH USAGE

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THE RELATIONSHIP OF SPECIFIC BACKGROUND FACTORS UPON ENGLISH USAGE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The ability to use English effectively is one of the most potent characteristics of the well-developed personality. The improper use of English can easily be one of the major factors that retard an individual's social progress. In many instances a person's socio-economic success may be restricted if he is not able to use English in an effective and pleasing manner. This fact is illustrated by many of the classified advertisements that are seen in the daily papers; these positions are for executives who must be able to speak convincingly and effectively.

Educators realize the value of using proper English, and indicate as much by the lengthy English periods found in all educational institutions. It appears that recognition has been given to the value of good English usage, but on the other hand it is doubtful that all the factors which may be inherent in the problem of teaching effective usage of English are receiving worth-while consideration. In the major stereotyped English departments of our educational institutions, there is an assumption that formal teaching of grammar is one of the most important phases of student
learning. Certainly this assumption, if not validated, is not worthy of the time and effort put into the problem both by teachers and by pupils.

Teachers indicate their eagerness to improve the pupils’ use of English by their strict adherence to accepted methods of grammatical instruction. While this procedure may be somewhat effective, the relative effects of the methods used should be closely examined if, by so doing, the schools can better develop the pupils’ effective use of English. A study made by J. O’Rouke reveals that pupils undergoing formal training in grammar fail to achieve complete mastery of essentials of English.\footnote{L. J. O’Rouke, "Rebuilding the English Usage Curriculum," \textit{Journal of Higher Education}, XXXV (1927), 32.}

If such formal training has so little measurable effect upon good English, there may be reason to believe that background factors contribute significantly to a pupil’s progress in the subject area.

The Problem

The problem of the present study is to investigate specific background areas of pupils who show average use of English, and of pupils who are recognized as having below-average use of English. The study will attempt to bring out certain tendencies, by the use of standardized tests, which the two groups investigated possess in varying degrees. The
aim of the study will be to bring out and evaluate the differ-
entiating background factors as revealed by the results
obtained on the standardized tests used in the investiga-
tion.

Procedure

The study was initiated by consulting the principal of
the North Texas State Teachers College Demonstration School,
Denton, Texas, in reference to pupils of the ninth grade who
were having difficulty in English. Permission was received
to make a study, using two groups of ninth-grade pupils, a
condition which would help to distinguish specific areas
in which the teacher might place extra effort as a means of
increasing the pupils' use of English.

The pupils participating in this study consist of two
groups. Group A involves twenty-five pupils in the regular
ninth-grade English class who are average in their use of
English. Group B includes twenty-five pupils who are recog-
nized as having a below-average ability in English usage.
These students are enrolled in a remedial English class and
are receiving special instruction.

The two groups were administered standardized tests in
an attempt to:

1. Determine the measurable intelligence of the two
groups as evidenced by scores obtained on the Otis Self-Ad-
ministering Test of Mental Ability.
2. Obtain data relative to school achievement through use of the Stanford Achievement Test.

3. Recognize social and economic background factors through information obtained on the Sims Score Card for Socio-Economic Status.

4. Determine the established study habits of the participating pupils through data obtained from the use of Wrenn's Study Habits Inventory.

5. Obtain information relative to personality patterns of the pupils through the use of the California Test of Personality, Secondary.

The results obtained on the tests given to both groups were then evaluated to determine which factors differentiated the two groups studied.

Delimitations

The study will make no attempt to differentiate between levels of superiority within each group; the purpose is only to note measurable differences between the groups in the areas reported and to evaluate these differences.

Sex and age will receive no special consideration or evaluation, but it seems proper to mention that Group B was at a mean chronological age of 15.2, whereas Group A has a mean chronological age of 14.3.

Chapters II through VI present the results obtained from the administration of the standardized tests, and
Chapter VII reports the conclusions warranted by the evidence obtained in this investigation.
CHAPTER II

INTELLIGENCE AS A DIFFERENTIATING FACTOR
IN THE EFFECTIVE USE OF ENGLISH

Any effort to obtain data which might be pertinent in
the evaluation of pupils' progress necessarily involves some
attempt to evaluate intelligence. Figures 1 and 2 show the
scores made on the Otis Self-Administering Test of Mental
Ability, which was administered to the participating pupils.
The A group offers a range of forty-four points, extending
from seventy-three to 117, with a mean of 100.7, and an av-
erage deviation of 5.2.

These data offer quite definite contrast to the scores
made by the B group which present a mean of 89.6 and an ac-
companying range of seventy-three to 104. The range for
the B group is thirty-one points, with an average deviation
of 7.2.

The difference in the two groups is quite apparent,
but caution is necessary in reviewing the results. The
subject test is basically verbal, a fact which must be evalu-
ated since the B group may be handicapped by an inferior
reading ability. Possibly an intelligence test which of-
fers a measurement of mental fluidity through the evalua-
tion of both verbal and performance material would be of more
Fig. 1. -- Distribution of intelligence quotients for Group A.
Fig. 2. -- Distribution of intelligence quotients for Group B.
diagnostic value. However, it is believed that the relative means would not differ too greatly; this fact is evidenced by David Wechsler, who indicates:

Though test results show that the rating which an individual attains will frequently depend upon the type of intelligence test used, they also show a contrary tendency. When large numbers of individuals are examined with a variety of intelligence tests, those who make high scores on any one of them tend to make high scores on the remaining ones; and the same holds for those who make low and intermediate scores. This dual characteristic of human abilities, their specificity on the one hand and interdependence on the other, has long been appreciated.¹

In considering the range of intelligence scores, it would appear undesirable for a teacher, using the traditional teaching techniques, to instruct and guide the pupils in Group B as a whole. Further investigation into contents of subject matter would be valuable in determining the methods of instruction to be employed and types of objectives that are worthy of pursuit. Teachers accustomed to teaching the formal subject matter would in all probability find that the pupils are not in a position to appreciate or understand the importance of any curriculum that is above their level. There is the great danger that instead of promoting the pupil's ability in a given subject, the potential effectiveness of the pupil's English will be diminished. If the teacher is not careful, the results of his authority may

¹David Wechsler, The Measurement of Adult Intelligence, p. 5.
be detrimental to the pupil's progress. On the other hand, there is the possibility that once a teacher is aware of the makeup of such a group of pupils, the methods employed will be too lax. Pupils easily become conscious of this purposeful method and may become uneasy about being associated with a below-average group. The teacher will have to take the group at the level which seems more in harmony with the needs and abilities of the class as a whole, and accelerate with conscious recognition of the potentials of the group, as Robert Davis so clearly points out:

It is fully as important to consider whether children can learn efficiently as whether they actually do learn efficiently. Appraisal of their capacity for school work should inquire whether they have been properly provided with background facts and skills, whether they are working under wholesome physical and emotional conditions, whether they possess appropriate methods for mastering subjects, and whether they possess scholastic aptitude. Some individuals who are richly gifted with mechanical or social aptitude may singularly lack academic inclinations required for scholastic success.

If it were possible to eliminate the effect of all influences except that of potential capacity to learn, children would still vary their responses to learning material. Such variability in capacity to learn indicates that classroom standards must take into account pupil differences. Children who are capable of superior performance should be given tasks from which they will derive greatest benefit. Problems related to the selection of types of learning material best suited to the needs of the children require thorough examination of their learning ability. It is also important to consider the nature and extent to which various types of ability possessed by children may be differentiated.²

²Robert A. Davis, Educational Psychology, p. 45
The measure of intelligence as obtained by the *Otis Tests of Mental Ability* is one means of differentiating the abilities possessed by various members of the group. In considering intelligence, with respect to the tests used, it becomes apparent that inasmuch as this factor is established, there is a difference between the two groups in this area. The intelligence quotient of Group B would have a tendency to indicate that the subject matter of formal grammar would hold little value or interest to pupils in this group, and that continued presentation of this material would do little to aid the pupils to overcome their handicap, as they would not be in a position to comprehend the English material offered to them. This fallacy of instruction was noted by Asker Williams as early as 1923:

> Knowledge of formal grammar influences ability to judge the grammatical correctness of sentence and ability in English composition only to a negligible degree. And that time spent upon formal grammar in the elementary school is wasted as far as the majority of pupils is concerned, and that teachers of English composition must seek some other reason for the alleged generally poor ability in this subject than the neglect of formal grammar in grade school.³

It remains for the teacher to present material to the pupils in this group so that they will receive the greatest possible benefit. Whether or not the difficulty lies in the mechanics of English or in the meaning of words cannot be

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³Asker Williams, "Does Knowledge of Formal Grammar Function?" *School and Society*, XVII (January 27, 1923), 106.
determined from this study. It is expected that great difficulty would be encountered in both fields, if the present intellectual limits of the pupils are not taken into consideration. Both groups must be taught material that is at their level of maturity; but when ages and grade placement are held constant, the technique must be distinct as it applies to the specific group of pupils concerned. It becomes apparent that the B group would have difficulty in comprehending formal grammar; therefore, some other method will have to be utilized. One partial plan of remedial instruction is offered by W. S. Guiles, who makes the following suggestion:

In the wake of an extensive program of educational diagnosis, a well organized scheme of remedial instruction should follow. Deficiencies which are revealed by the former become basis of the latter. Self teaching practice exercises, by means of which children learn modes and principles of expression through much doing, should constitute an important phase of the remedial work. If satisfactory practice exercises are not available, then sentiment should be created and expressed for this kind of teaching instrument.4

The methods utilized will have to give full recognition to the intelligence of the pupils. It necessarily must be a program which would give recognition to the needs of the pupils and endeavor to meet these needs. The educational plan for the pupil should be tailored to the pattern of his own

4W. S. Guiles, "Diagnosing Student Shortcomings in English Composition," Journal of Educational Research, XIV (September, 1926), 86.
individual contours and readjustment, and the pupil should receive such aids from time to time in terms of the future growth of the individual. It is observed that in this way the educational plan might well be thought of as the primary factor in guidance. Any educational plan offered to the pupils would therefore furnish the school a method which would assist youth in a truly democratic way to meet their own best needs.

The results of the intelligence scales administered to the participating pupils indicate that intelligence is a significant factor contributing to effective use of English, and that recognition will have to be given to pupils with low intelligence with the understanding that their own particular needs will have to be considered under conditions different from those of average pupils.

5Leslie L. Chisholm, Guiding Youth in the Secondary School, p. 31.
CHAPTER III

PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS OF GROUPS A AND B

Some consideration must be given to the non-intellectual components of an individual's makeup before a remedial program can be initiated. One means of obtaining some gauge of these factors is through the use of a personality test such as the California Test of Personality, Secondary, which was used in this investigation. It will be noticed from the evidence contained in the graph on the following page that the B group received lower scores in eleven of the personality traits measured, equal scores in three of the traits, and a higher score than that of the A group in only one trait.

In examining the specific areas tested it is observed that the B group obtained a higher percentile score in the factor "Self-reliance" than did the A group. A high score in this item indicates that a student is usually an independent worker who can manage quite well for himself. Characteristically, a person receiving such a score is one who tends to direct his own activities and is self-reliant in most situations. It appears that this item is a little out of the ordinary range of expectancy for the Group B pupils,
Fig. 3. -- Personality profile of Groups A and B.

A. Self-reliance
B. Sense of Personal Worth
C. Sense of Personal Freedom
D. Feeling of Belonging
E. Withdrawing Tendencies
F. Nervous Symptoms

1. Social Adjustment
2. Social Standards
B. Social Skills
C. Anti-social Tendencies
D. Family Relations
E. School Relations
F. Community Relations

Total Adjustment

10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 99 percentiles
since it would be generally assumed that the A group would tend to be more self-reliant than the B group.

This tendency by the B group to score high in "Self-reliance" may be of a compensating nature. As an "ego-boosting" device, the pupils aware of their insecurity may deliberately mark a response directly opposite to that which they actually feel. Another approach is that this group may be in more of a habit of working independently in a strong individualistic manner; thereby they acquire the feeling that they are not dependent upon other people, and so they tend to play and work by methods irrespective of social contact. The irregularity of scores obtained by Group B is readily observed in Figure 3, which shows the percentile scores made by the two groups.

On Section 1-A, "Sense of Personal Worth," the B group falls at the twentieth percentile, while the A group is located at the fiftieth percentile; the latter score is more desirable for an average group of pupils. The profile reveals that the B group surpasses twenty per cent of the pupils on whom the percentile norms of this test are based, and is surpassed by eighty per cent. This condition would appear to be a rather important item for teachers to recognize when dealing with below-average English pupils. A low percentile rating in this item indicates that the pupils believe they are not regarded as being worthy, or that they
are aware of the fact that their ability is below average. This situation is one wherein a teacher may be able to do some effective teaching.

The ability to make a student feel self-sufficient is one of the most effective contributions of a successful teacher. When an individual is able to feel that his efforts are appreciated and worthy of recognition, then he is ready to direct energy into other channels which will gain additional recognition, increasing his sense of personal worth. It remains for the teacher to guide such efforts, so that they are to the advantage both of the individual and of the group.

Section 1-C indicates a differentiation of fifteen percentile points on "Sense of Personal Freedom." However, both are below the fiftieth percentile score. This position indicates an undesirable standard inasmuch as the pupil may feel that the policies which determine and govern his life are of a totalitarian nature, a particularly undesirable attitude. If adolescents are of the opinion that they have a reasonable voice in making policies, then there is a much stronger tendency to perpetuate the ideals that are incorporated therein. A sense of personal freedom in the school suggests an atmosphere under which the pupil feels comparatively free of restriction.

In Section 1-D, "Feeling of Belonging," the two groups
score at the thirtieth percentile, which indicates that aid is necessary if school and social morale are to be of the highest caliber. A high score in this item would indicate that a pupil is secure in the knowledge that he has the love of his family and is able to maintain a harmonious relationship with his friends and associates in general. Pupils showing poor ability to get along with their peers usually score low on this item, and in the majority of instances they constitute behavior problems to teachers; this tendency is an action which may be a means of receiving attention which they cannot obtain otherwise.

The groups show a slight difference in the item "Withdrawing Tendencies," the A group scoring at the thirty-fifth percentile, the B group at the twenty-fifth percentile. If it is desired that pupils do not substitute fantasies for real-life situations, then another objective of teachers should be to free pupils from this tendency, or to direct their artistic patterns into creative channels.

In the final tendency under "Self Adjustment," both groups tend to score close to the fiftieth percentile, the B group at the forty-fifth, and the A group at the fifty-fifth. This score is characteristic of normal adjustment and indicates relative lack of nervous tension; but the teacher should always be alert for physical expressions of emotional conflict that may be hindering the proper adjustments of pupils' conflicts which might evidence either
neurasthenia or indicate the presence of organic disorders.

On the "Social Adjustment" section of the test, the A group again shows a tendency to make a higher percentile rating than the B group. The "Social Adjustment" score of the B group is located at the twentieth percentile. The score of the A group is at the fortieth percentile, below the average expectancy, but nevertheless not undesirable for that group. The social-adjustment component, being based on feeling of social security, offers more for the teacher to work with. In the item on "Social Standards," the greatest deviation is noticed, the A group scoring at the seventieth percentile whereas the B group is again located at the twenty-fifth percentile. When a desirable score is made in "Social Standards," it indicates a pupil who has the understanding and appreciation of the demands made by society. It is both desirable and necessary for proper development that worthwhile social standards be cultivated in the youthful mind. Testing by the California Test of Personality indicates that the A group is ready to accept and appreciate the authority of teachers, and they are able to accept the difference between right and wrong.

Scores obtained by the B group imply that there is emotional conflict in regard to policies instituted by various governing authorities. If not clarified, attitudes indicating conflict may be very harmful to the development of the individual.
The two groups are more closely in harmony with each other with regard to family relations, school relations, and community relations. Both groups score at the forty-fifth percentile in the section on "Family Relations," which, although below the fiftieth percentile, indicates that family adjustment is satisfactory, but that improvement in family relations would be highly desirable.

In many instances school adjustments are unsatisfactory because the school work is not adapted to the pupils' level of interest. The item "School Relations" shows the B group to be at the twenty-fifth percentile. This is a very undesirable factor if the teachers are to deal most effectively with the pupil. The pupils scoring at this level usually are insecure in their associations with the teacher and with the other pupils. School work that was made enjoyable to the pupil would go far toward making the individual feel more secure in the scholastic environment.

The factor "Community Relations" shows the groups to be located on the thirty-fifth percentile. Good adjustment in this item indicates that pupils are content in their community relations, that they get along well with their friends and neighbors, that they show respect for the rights of others, and in general that they easily tolerate the social demands that are expected of them.

The profile as a whole for the B group shows a lack of
security and failure to obtain favorable recognition in school situations; it also indicates that these pupils are without the immediate social skills to better themselves so that they can advance socially and individually.

The A group shows a fairly stable adjustment in the whole profile; however, the low scores on "Feeling of Belonging" and on "Withdrawing Tendencies" should be investigated to see whether there is any relation between these two factors and the school situation.

Educators should make every possible attempt to understand better the personalities of their pupils. The argument that the understanding of peoples' motives is largely intuitive may be vaguely true, but an understanding of people is something all people should try to achieve.

The personality investigation of the participating groups brought out some rather significant tendencies in the personality scales.

It is noted that the A group was slightly favored on the personality scale in that it was close to the fiftieth percentile in the majority of items measured. The score for the A group did not go lower than the fortieth percentile in twelve of the tendencies measured, and was below the fortieth percentile in only three of the measured items; this is representative of satisfactory adjustment in most situations.
The B group, however, is located at a significantly lower level on the whole personality scale. With respect to English usage, it is of particular interest to note that the weakest personality tendencies measured in the B group were those traits which depend so greatly on the socialization of the pupil -- his social standards, social adjustment, social skills, and anti-social tendencies. It is also noted that these are the factors in which the B group deviates the greatest from the scores made by the A group on the same items. It is not surprising to find that a group of pupils who use poor English make low scores on items dealing with social adjustment; on the other hand, it should not be the expected score that is taken for granted and forgotten about. Of importance here is the fact that the B group is at a very undesirable level in its social adjustment, and steps should be taken immediately to better the situation. Daniel A. Prescott is of the opinion that

Since status needs can be met only by establishing and maintaining certain personal relationships, the curriculum is not the primary factor in determining whether schools frustrate or satisfy these needs in a particular situation, and with particular children. Personal factors are much more important and the curriculum must be related to the status needs of the individual.¹

When the English tasks offered to the pupil by the curriculum are beyond his capacity to accomplish, it is very

probable that loss of status may result from the continued failure in such tasks. The implication intended here is if it is obvious that a child does not participate, regardless of reason, in the formal curricular activities of the group, then it is up to the teacher and the administrator to find activities in which the pupil will be able to function effectively and be recognized in the eyes of the group as a valuable participating member. Prescott expresses this feeling rather effectively:

"It is such a deadly experience to be daily in the company of other children but not able to participate with them in a valuable way that the school simply should not permit this to happen to any child."  

The English teacher having such a group composed of individualistic, non-participating personalities would be able to see the fallacy of employing conventional methods of English instruction. It is of little importance to this group that social customs demand the knowledge and effective use of English. This attitude was rather well expressed by one pupil who offered, "English ain't going to help me none. I get along all right now." This statement cannot be questioned; indeed, the pupils in all probability do get along very well in their social lives. Confined to the associations of a few specific friends, they find that their social environment does not require that their use of English be

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2Ibid., p. 217.
proficient or correct. Before the teacher can hope to teach just plain English usage to the pupils, it is imperative to understand what English is demanded of them in their present social environments; then through a skillful blending of methods the teacher may incorporate the English with the needs of the pupils so that they will spontaneously accept the need for further knowledge. They would then pursue under their own power the means of obtaining and utilizing this knowledge.

Pupils will not accept over-emphasis on non-related linguistic material. Some relation will have to be made between the material that is offered to the pupil and the experiences of the pupil. It is noted by Prescott that we do not associate with real-life situations the verbal symbols given to the pupil. Before attempts can be made to increase the pupils' ability to speak effectively, it must be understood that symbolization must follow, not precede, actual experiences so that symbols will have valid content and clear-cut connotations.\(^3\)

The low scores obtained by the B group on "Social Skills" may be partially due to their inadequate use of English, but this assumption cannot be made without further evidence to substantiate it. The meaning intended here is that the pupils showing poor use of English will remain in circles in

\(^3\)Ibid., p. 218.
which their expressions are taken as the "natural style," thereby limiting their progress in social expansion and in gaining more social skills.

Their lack of certain social skills on the one hand retards their advancing into other social circles, and on the other hand strengthens their bond with their immediate social group. They are in a class where most of their associates will be found, a fact shown by the strong membership in the Future Farmers of America. When they desire to enrich their social activities, they may find that they are limited, in part, by their knowledge and use of English. The significant item appears to be that teachers noting that their students seem to be acutely limited in their social relations will recognize that the English taught must be made to fit the personality receiving such instruction. Instruction in formal grammar would be insufficient for achieving this purpose. Taking into consideration the possibility that the pupil may become fairly proficient in formal grammar, the probability is slight that there would be a transfer value of the material when applied to English usage. This point was emphasized in a study made by Segel and Barr, in which it was noted that there was no immediate transfer of training in formal grammar so far as applied English grammar was concerned.\(^4\)

Factors showing differences in personality between the two groups are the scores obtained in the "Social Adjustment" section of the test. In every social-adjustment tendency measured, except for "Family Relations" and "Community Relations," the B group ranked considerably lower than did the A group. The teacher wishing to assist the pupils in learning to use English would be careful to observe any outward manifestations that may indicate chronic uneasiness on the part of the pupil; the teacher should then apply corrective, remedial techniques accordingly.
CHAPTER IV

LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT EXISTING IN
GROUPS A AND B

It was felt necessary to determine the amount of achievement exhibited by the two groups so that actual subject matter knowledge could be evaluated. The Stanford Achievement Test, Advanced Battery, Partial, Form D, was administered to both of the participating groups in order to obtain further evidence which might be related to school progress. There appears to be much which can be learned if the means of the participating groups are compared to the norms presented by the subject test, in as much as the norms have been evolved from a more representative and extensive population than has previously been utilized with comparable tests.

The data which were obtained on this battery are presented in Figure 4. With the exception of one test score made by Group A, both groups give evidence of being retarded in terms of grade placement on all six of the tested areas. The A group received a normal grade equivalent of nine in "Arithmetical Reasoning." Some retardation appears evident when it is recognized that the groups should be expected to total an average grade equivalent of nine. The retardation
is definitely greater in Group B than in Group A, according to the results of this testing.

In examining the specific areas tested, it is noted that Group A is consistently superior in all six fields. It was observed that retardation exists in both groups, but since the study is basically concerned with the problems of Group B as related to academic progress in the use of English, the status of these pupils will be reviewed. It appears that the pupils do understand the meaning of words, as their highest score was made in the test involving word meaning. This score gave them a grade equivalent of seven. Their problem appears to exist more in the effective use of language than in its general comprehension. The spelling test reveals a somewhat pathetically low average grade equivalent of five years and six months. These data presented in Figure 4 suggest a problem in teaching technique, since the relatively high scores in arithmetical reasoning and computation and in reading tests suggest some use of deduction and comprehension. This condition should be revealed in a much higher spelling score. The motivational factor needs to be studied further and then recognized in the remedial English class.

It is interesting to note that the group differences on the Stanford Achievement Test appear to reflect the data presented by the intelligence test in Figures 1 and 2.
The achievement scores of the two groups measured show the greatest contrast of all factors considered in this investigation. The grade equivalent obtained by the A group on the Stanford Achievement Test was located at grade eight, third month. This rating would place the pupils six months below the expected achievement, although they are slightly lacking in achievement, according to the Stanford norms; however, they are progressing at a nearly normal rate. The A group ranked closer to their expected score on the factors of paragraph meaning and word meaning, falling at the eight year, eight months level. Their language usage, as indicated by the Stanford Test, is within the range of average expectations.

The B group ranked considerably lower on the Stanford Achievement Test than would be expected of a ninth-grade English class. It is apparent that the English teacher should be on the alert to gain knowledge pertaining to the achievement level of the pupils. She should not be eager to attribute the usage of poor English to laxity or laziness on the part of the pupil. The material offered to the student may easily be above his level of achievement and will tend to discourage his attempts to become capable of using better English. Realizing the importance of using English effectively, Mursell points out one important aspect of presentation which must be recognized by the English teacher:
The enormous diversity of aim and procedure in secondary school and university courses in compositions and English literature has been a matter of wide comment. There is where we are able to see the value of approaching the entire problem from the standpoint of psychology rather than method. Psychology certainly cannot tell us what we should include in an ideal course, for this will depend on our notions as to its proper aims. And it cannot indicate the one ideal method which should be employed, as there never is one ideal method. But it can tell us what principles to apply and what conditions to maintain if we wish to develop with maximum efficiency the ability to use the English language.¹

The score received by the B group in spelling is of special significance. When the pupil is poor in spelling, it is not to be expected that he will use English effectively. Remedial procedure should be started at the child's level of achievement in spelling and then advanced at the proper rate to insure effective comprehension. This could not be done merely by ordering a new text in spelling, but should take into consideration the pupil's level of understanding of the principal mechanisms pertaining to spelling. The principal factor evident here is that pupils who are inferior in their use of English are low in all phases of subject matter covered by the Stanford Achievement Test. This tendency to score low in achievement should be investigated by teachers who are earnest in their work and who hope to advance the pupil's effective use of English. Poor spelling ability is the most significant factor that

exhibited itself in both groups. It would appear important that teachers give more attention to this factor and partially dispense with the drill method in favor of something that is more widely accepted and encouraged by authorities.

Each word must have a meaning to the pupil, and that meaning must be such that the pupil will preserve it for future use in its correct construction. The first task in dealing with the poor speller is to diagnose the causes of his faulty organization. From that point on, it remains for the teacher to employ the particular technique which applies to the pupil in question.
CHAPTER V
THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF PARTICIPATING PUPILS

When investigating the socio-economic status of the participating pupils, it may be well to begin with a brief study of the fathers' occupations in relation to the academic status of the pupils.

A consideration of their fathers' occupations shows that the pupils may be classified into five groups as suggested by Sims.¹

Group 1. Professional men, proprietors of large businesses, and higher executives.

Group 2. Commercial service workers, clerical service workers, large land owners, managerial service of a lower order than in Group 1, and proprietors of businesses (from five to ten men).

Group 3. Artisan proprietors of exclusive shops, petty officials, printing trade employees, skilled laborers with some managerial responsibility, shop owners, and police officials.

¹Verner M. Sims, Manual of Directions for the Sims Score Card for Determining Socio-economic Status, p. 9.
Group 4. Skilled laborers, workers in building and transportation trades, personal service workers, and small shop owners doing their own work.

Group 5. Unskilled laborers, common laborers, and varied employment workers.

Typical occupations of these groups are illustrated:

Group 1. Professional men like architects, authors, artists, college teachers, college administrators, dentists, editors of large newspapers, inventors, journalists, lawyers, and physicians.

Group 2. Accountants, bookkeepers, cashiers, large-scale farmers, high school teachers, musicians, managers of small corporations, and assistants in government employment.

Group 3. Farmers, bakers, barbers, cleaners and dyers, tailors, plumbers, cobblers, clerks in stores, railroad conductors, mail clerks, detectives, and police sergeants.

Group 4. Chefs, carpenters, cooks, electricians, locksmiths, janitors, policemen, tenants, sailors, tinmiths, and small shop owners employing no help.

Group 5. Drivers, bootblacks, delivery men, fish peddlers, suit pressers, and all common laborers.

Table 1 presents the data relative to the occupations of the parents of the pupils investigated. This information shows that the largest number of parents is under Group 3; most of those in this group are farmers. It is noticed that
Group B shows a greater concentration in Group 3 than does Group A. This information does not seem very pertinent, or of particular significance in the present investigation. It is interesting to note that in Group B, one father's occupation is listed under Group 1, but since the number represents such a small sampling it would be unwise to make any specific interpretation. On the whole there does not seem to be any great difference in the occupational classifications of parents.

### Table 1
Fathers' Occupations as Classified in Groups Suggested by Sims

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sims Classification</th>
<th>Classification for this Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1........</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2........</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3........</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 4........</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 5........</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total....</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 exhibits the information concerning the educational background representative of the parents in the two groups.

**TABLE 2**

**EDUCATIONAL PREPARATION OF PARENTS OF THE PUPILS INVESTIGATED**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education of Parents</th>
<th>Classification for This Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of pupils whose fathers and mothers both attended and graduated from high school..................</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of pupils reporting that either their father or their mother had a high school education......</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of pupils reporting that neither parent had a high school education........................</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of mothers with college education....</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of fathers with college education....</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of pupils reporting that both parents had a college education.........................</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This information reveals that five more pupils in
Group A have parents both of whom attended high school than
do the pupils in Group B. There are ten fathers in Group B
who did not attend high school, as compared with five fa-
thers in Group A who were not credited with attendance in
high school. Group A shows that only two pupils gave in-
formation which indicated that neither parent had any high
school education, whereas four pupils from Group B indicated
that their parents did not attend high school. Parents of
three pupils in Group A and one pupil in Group B went to
college. Group B appears to be slightly favored by having
six mothers recorded as having attended college as compared
to only three mothers in Group A.

The most significant item to consider here seems to be
the fact that there is a tendency for the pupils whose par-
ents attended high school to be more progressive in school
than pupils whose parents did not attend high school. The
influence of the parents' education upon the achievement of
the pupil would have to be further investigated before any
significant evidence could be evaluated.

Closely associated with the educated parent is the num-
ber of books and current literature that are available in
the home. This will be the next item to receive considera-
tion, the amount of current literature subscribed to in the
homes of the two groups. Table 3 shows the total number of
periodicals regularly received by the pupils' parents.

This information shows that there are more magazine subscribers found in the homes of the B group than in the A group. In both groups there are thirteen subscribers to three magazines each. The B group has seven pupils coming from homes which receive two magazines each, whereas in the A group there is no pupil coming from a home where two magazines are regularly taken.

**TABLE 3**

**THE NUMBER OF MAGAZINES REGULARLY RECEIVED IN THE HOMES OF THE PUPILS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pupils</th>
<th>Number of Magazines</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group A......</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group B......</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The practical effect of such subscriptions upon the pupils' achievement would be difficult to measure, since it cannot be determined whether or not the pupils take time to read the magazines received in the homes. The type of material contained in the magazines would in all probability have a great deal to do with the pupils' motivation in spending any considerable time with the periodicals. The majority
of the magazines listed are of the popular type; there are few references to scientific or currently progressive magazines.

The most popular magazines mentioned by the pupils of both groups were Life, Country Gentleman, Better Homes and Gardens, Reader's Digest, and an assortment of pulp magazines such as Ranch Romances, Spicy Detective, The Shadow, and Air Trails.

Closely allied to this is the number of books that were reported in the homes of the two groups. This information is given in Table 4.

**TABLE 4**

**THE NUMBER OF BOOKS FOUND IN THE HOMES OF THE PUPILS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Books</th>
<th>Classification for This Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 25.........</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 to 125.......</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>126 to 500......</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 500...</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None.............</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 indicates that there seems to be little apparent difference in the number of books owned by the parents, but once again conclusions would have to be carefully drawn as there is little weight given to the types of books that are in the homes. One pupil who receives credit for more than five hundred books is the son of a college professor; and it is very likely that the books found in this home would differ greatly in content from those found in the home of an auto salesman who also has more than five hundred books in his home. It seems that the question that would be pertinent here is, what books does the pupil read, and what is his position in relation to the achievement of the group? No answer will be attempted here, because the present study is more concerned with the relationship that is existing between the two groups. The number of books found in the homes of the participating pupils does not appear unduly significant.

The opportunity that a pupil has to do some conscientious reading is increased if there is a private room in which he is able to study without being disturbed. The number of pupils having private study rooms is shown in Table 5.

The difference which exists between the two groups in relation to private study rooms does not appear significant. There is a slight tendency for the pupils of Group A to be favored with having rooms in which they can study undisturbed.
TABLE 5
NUMBER OF PUPILS HAVING PRIVATE STUDY ROOMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pupils</th>
<th>Private Study Room</th>
<th>No Private Study Room</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group A...</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group B...</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is sometimes assumed that pupils who do not study are very active in social organizations, and the continued participation in such organizations causes low school marks. An attempt will be made to show the relationship existing between membership in various organizations and the effect of membership upon scholastic achievement. Table 6 shows the number of pupils who are active members of school clubs that require payment of dues.

This table seems to be rather significant in as much as it pertains to the social activities of the subject pupils. That Group A is favored in its social activity is evidenced by the fact that out of the twenty-five pupils comprising this group, only four of the pupils reported that they were not members of any organization. Since the clubs associated with the school require only nominal dues, the financial obstacle is not too great to keep the pupil from becoming active in a club. This non-membership factor could be of a
detrimental nature, since it would limit the associations of the pupil with other members of the school body, and in turn limit the common interest of the group. School clubs and organizations can go far toward helping the pupils to understand the nature and purpose of school work; in this way the clubs act as a motivating force upon the various members and the student body as a whole. Further evidence

**TABLE 6**

**MEMBERSHIP OF THE PUPILS IN CLUBS REQUIRING DUES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pupils</th>
<th>Number of Clubs in Which Active Membership Is Held</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group A....</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group B....</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

brought out the fact that not one of the Group B pupils was reported as being a member of the Boy Scouts. Of the twelve members who were in clubs, ten were members of the Future Farmers of America, one was a member of a "weight lifting" club, and one was a member of a "builders" club. In comparing the types of organizations in Group B with those found in Group A, it is noticed that in Group A four were members of the Future Farmers of America, thirteen were
members of the Boy Scouts, and the other organizations represented were typical of clubs in which pupils were given the opportunity to engage in ample social activity, at the same time promoting themselves along progressive channels. This fact is also true of the pupils who were members of the Future Farmers of America. It is apparent that the pupils of Group B were far more restricted in social contacts than those of Group A.

It is interesting to note the relationship existing here between the number of pupils of both groups active in organizations and the scores made on the California Test of Personality. In the personality test, the scores made on Section 2-A, "Social Standards"; 2-B, "Social Skills"; and 2-C, "Anti-social Tendencies," were low in each instance for the members of Group B, whereas members of Group A tended to score between the fortieth and fiftieth percentile. Of additional interest is the fact that the B group is apparently made up of a group of pupils who are rather individualistic, as is indicated by their personality profiles. This trait is further evidenced by their large participation in the Future Farmers of America, a group who in later life can be expected to be extremely individualistic in nature.

Teachers, becoming aware of this "lack of social comfort" in their pupils, would do well to give some of the stimulation necessary to bring the interest of the pupils
together in the form of a social organization. Helping pupils to enjoy the companionship of common-interest friends would certainly be beneficial to the pupils, and in all probability would assist the teachers to more sharply define and pursue their professional objectives.

No sharp contrast was noted in the socio-economic status of the two groups of pupils. They were fairly equal in size of homes, incomes of parents, number of brothers and sisters, and the social status of the parents.

There was a slight tendency for the pupils of Group A to be a little better favored by conveniences when the individual pupils were considered, but taking the group as a whole, the difference was not significant. The only factor in which there was a sharp difference between the two groups was the one which considered the number of social organizations to which the pupils belonged. Eighty-four per cent of the pupils in Group A were members of some type of club. In contrast to this condition, only forty-eight per cent of the pupils in Group B were club members. This factor appears to show the limitations that a pupil may have because of using poor English. It is not to be implied that any one factor in English is hindering the pupil's social progress, but it is indicated that poor English can retard the pupil socially. The only other factor worthy of mention is the education of the parents. The A group was again slightly
favored by having parents with records of higher education; eighty per cent of the pupils in Group A had parents who had attended high school. In Group B sixty per cent of the parents had gone to high school.
CHAPTER VI

STUDY HABITS AND TECHNIQUES UTILIZED

BY THE PUPILS

The final factors to be considered in the investigation are the study habits of the participating pupils. The Study Habits Inventory, a standardized test developed by Gilbert C. Wrenn, was used for this purpose. The inventory is broken down into four sections; section one deals with reading and note-taking techniques; section two, with habits of concentration; section three takes up the distribution of time and social relationships in study; section four considers general habits and attitudes of work. In this inventory the students are asked to answer various questions in accordance with their work habits. For the sake of clarification as to the manner in which questions are supposed to be answered, Wrenn's own directions are presented:

The following is a list of statements of habits and attitudes which may affect use of study time and consequent success in school work and study. You are asked to state your habits with regard to these items, not in accordance with what you think you should or should not do, but in accordance with what you yourself are in the habit of doing.1

The inventory is composed of a weighted checklist of

1Gilbert C. Wrenn, Study Habits Inventory, p. 2.
specific study habits and attitudes which high scholarship and low scholarship groups of students possess in differing proportions. A sample question, representative of those in the inventory, is presented in Table 7. The pupil simply checks the frequency with which he is accustomed to doing specific things.

**TABLE 7**

**SAMPLE OF QUESTIONS PRESENTED IN THE WRENN STUDY HABITS INVENTORY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Rarely True</th>
<th>Sometimes True</th>
<th>Often True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have to re-read material several times, going back to pick out the points I missed........................</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses are marked and weighted with either a plus or minus. All items receiving a negative score are considered as habits which need correction. They are representative of scores made by low scholarship students who were used in establishing norms for the test. The positive scores are more characteristic of students who attain high scholarship records.

The low scores received by the B group may be a result of their poor spelling ability and their rather low achievement in all areas associated with reading and writing. It
is reasonable to assume that those who have poor ability in these other areas will encounter difficulty when it becomes necessary to take notes in a hurry or to do any extensive reading. This trouble may also be reflected in their general habits and attitudes of work. If the pupil is not prepared to take down the necessary material or is unable to comprehend the material assigned, it is doubtful that he will have a desirable attitude toward the work. The chief items differentiating the two groups are observed in the note-taking techniques and in general habits of work. The scores of both groups were totaled and the mean computed; the results are shown in Table 8.

**TABLE 8**

**MEAN SCORES OBTAINED BY THE GROUPS ON THE WRENN STUDY HABITS INVENTORY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Mean Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Reading and note-taking techniques employed by pupils</td>
<td>/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Habits of concentration used by the two groups</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Distribution of time and social relationship in inventory</td>
<td>/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. General habits and attitudes of work</td>
<td>/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>/28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The total scores of the groups will have to be observed with caution since it would be relatively easy for negative scores to bring down the positive scores made by the pupils and give a false conception of the pupils' study habits. In consulting the average norms of the test, it is noted that the total score has a median of plus 15. It becomes apparent that the pupils of Group B should be examined closely to see whether something can be done to increase the effectiveness of their study time. The A group is well above the median norms, and the pupils in this group apparently are able to utilize their time much more effectively than the pupils in Group B. To be considered by the teacher is the fact that poor English pupils have methods and techniques of study which are inadequate to meet the demands of the curriculum.

It was noted from the Study Habits Inventory that Group B definitely had poor study habits, while Group A exhibited study habits which appeared to be satisfactory and above the median scores on which the norms of the Wrenn Study Habits Inventory are based.

Consideration will be given here to study methods and environmental factors which have been found to retard, hinder, or preclude the satisfactory comprehension of subject matter by average pupils. While these problems are of a minor nature to the average pupil, one writer defines such
techniques as distinctive characteristics of inefficient pupils.\(^2\)

It was found that pupils who do poor work in secondary schools are characterized by an inability to read textbook material effectively; the idea of study as a process of memorizing; lack of a regular place and time for study; failure to concentrate upon the assignment; and practices of discontinuing study on a lesson before mastery of the material has been attained.\(^3\)

The teacher would have to be careful in using any one criterion in determining the cause of failure. The teacher often decides that slow progress is due to ineffective study habits resulting from laziness or "not trying" on the part of the pupil. This is contrary to what pupils list as the main cause of failure, as was brought out in a study made in Fort Worth, Texas, in 1926. In this study the students, who were all failures in school work, were asked to check a list of study techniques and note which ones they failed to observe. The inefficient study techniques were reported by the pupils in the following frequency:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lack of home study</th>
<th>78</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Little studying</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient effort</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\(^3\)E. G. Williamson, *How to Counsel Students*, p. 311.
It is difficult to say whether or not "study habits" are causes of failures, or whether lack of success in school and loss of interest in school result in poor study habits. One third of the failing high school pupils in Gardiner's study, referred to above, reported "incompatibility" between teachers and pupils as a cause of their study difficulties which ultimately led to discouragement and scholastic failure. These pupils also mentioned the following significant reasons for their lack of studying: failure of teachers to teach them how to study with the result that they had "no knowledge of how to study," not being compelled to prepare lessons, being allowed to "drift along," having too many subjects, and dislike of subjects in which they failed. It becomes apparent that almost any type of failure can be blamed on some type of ineffective study habits.

Authorities in the field offer some of the following reasons for poor study habits. Witty and Lehman in a study of this particular problem concluded that teacher-directed study techniques and teaching pupils how to study are largely problems of teaching them how to read. Another cause

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5Paul A. Witty and Harvey C. Lehman, "Teaching the College Student How to Study," Education, VI (September, 1927), 37.
offered is lack of aptitude for effective study, meaning that pupils frequently lack sufficient aptitude for organization of their activities so that they will not interfere with study habits.\(^6\) Other areas to be investigated by the teacher attempting to track down the cause of low achievement and poor study habits may take up personality problems such as those which will produce persistent tendencies to worry and daydream. Social causes may be important factors to be considered in pupils, but in this particular study no apparent social differences were noted between the two groups. This does not imply that they do not exist, since the tools used are only preparatory to further investigation. Social factors such as (1) improper companions, (2) too much or too little spending money, (3) dating complex, (4) home conditions, (5) working too many hours after school, and various other factors that are of a personal nature may be extremely detrimental to efficient studying.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The present study was concerned with the investigation of specific factors, as revealed by the administration of standardized tests, that distinguished themselves as being of a differentiating nature distinguishing an average group of English pupils and a below-average group of English pupils, both of which were taking ninth-grade English.

The results obtained from the administration of the standardized tests are the basis for the following conclusions:

1. Intelligence is definitely a factor which distinguishes the pupils showing use of poor English from the pupils who show average use of English; consequently intelligence is a factor which must receive careful consideration in the remedial English class.

2. The personality factor of the individual is a vital area to be considered by the teacher of remedial English. A constricted personality is a handicap in gaining an effective knowledge of English, and English usage in turn can strongly influence the personality structure of the pupil.
3. Pupils who showed below-average use of English were found to be slow learners in all other areas of subject matter included in this test.

4. There is no significant difference in the socio-economic status of the average and below-average English pupils. This would imply that the socio-economic status of the student is of minor importance, unless the degree of such status is so great that it places the pupil in an unusually high cultural background. If this is the case, it will be recognized that the pupil belonging to the higher economic sphere will definitely benefit from the mere fact that he will have greater opportunity and will almost be forced by cultural customs and traditions to better his use of English.

5. There is a strong and significant relationship between good English usage and the techniques employed in study habits. There is evidence to show that pupils showing poor English usage have many more undesirable study habits than average English pupils. It cannot be determined from this study whether or not the study techniques utilized by the average group of English pupils are responsible for their satisfactory usage of English, or whether their achievement, which is at a higher level, makes it possible for them to organize their time and effort so as to receive the greatest benefit from study. It can be concluded, however, that the English pupils showing average
use of English have better study habits than those of the below-average English pupils.

6. There exists a comparatively large number of factors that affect the English usage of pupils, and there is relatively little weight that is placed upon English usage by any one factor, when taken into consideration from the isolated perspective.

7. There is a relatively small effect of formal education upon English usage.

8. The assumption that teaching of formal grammar will alone bring about adequate English usage must be discarded.

9. Pupils inclined toward frequent social activity show a tendency to be more effective in their use of English, than do pupils who participate less frequently in social activities.

10. Formal teaching of spelling has little effect on the ability of the pupil to spell and write English effectively. Poor spelling is a major weakness evident in students who show average use of English as well as with pupils who are below average in their use of English. Spelling is an important area in which teachers should do some progressive work, but the method should not be in the cut-and-dried drill manner that is so popular with the majority of spelling instructors.
Recommendations

The evidence obtained in the foregoing chapters warrants the following recommendations:

1. English teachers working in the remedial class should measure the pupils' intelligence before planning their corrective program. This would be necessary so that the teacher, when assigning work, would have a proper regard for the achievement and level of understanding of her pupils.

2. A program of social activity should be planned so that every student would have an opportunity to participate in activities requiring social contact and cultural modifications.

3. Teaching of formal grammar should be modified so as to take into consideration the needs and abilities of all the pupils, thereby recognizing the individual differences of the pupils in need of assistance.

4. The teacher should make every possible effort to help the pupils make the most of their study time. Sound study habits should be initiated in the classroom so that pupils could recognize the value of planned study time and efforts.

5. The teacher should make sincere attempts to become acquainted with the pupils' social pastimes. This would place her in a more opportune position to understand the attitudes and opinions of the pupils under her care.
6. Greater use should be made of standardized tests and other diagnostic tools as a means of discovering some of the pupils' weaker areas, thereby enabling the teacher to direct her efforts toward assisting the pupils to learn effective usage of English.
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