

THE NATURE AND THE EXTENT OF ERRORS IN WRITTEN
LANGUAGE AND THE POSSIBLE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN THESE ERRORS AND CERTAIN
FACTORS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

The purpose of this study is to show possible relationships between certain environmental, personality, and scholastic factors and difficulties in written language.

Significance of the Study

Written English is recognized as an important tool for citizens in a democracy, a tool whose attainment is worthy of much time and effort, if the expenditure of these be needed. But written English represents a difficult undertaking for many students, even after they have spent eight years in elementary school and are preparing to enter high school. Believing that this statement may be true of the eighth-grade pupils of the Pilot Point Public School of the 1950-51 school year, their home-room teacher has administered certain tests to them, and this study is undertaken with a view toward aiding these students, who are recognized as young citizens in a democracy, and who, along with many other students of like training, experience certain difficulties with written English.

Sources of Data and Method of Procedure

The information used as the basis of this study was obtained from several sources. In the early fall of 1950 the local school administration made a socio-economic survey of the pupils' families and homes, and the information thus secured was made available for this study. In addition, information pertaining to achievement, mental maturity, and personality of each of the eighth-grade students was obtained from results of standardized tests administered to them in the spring of 1951. Data from the socio-economic survey and from the standardized tests was supplemented by information from each student's permanent school record, which indicates his general physical condition, any visual defects as revealed by a Keystone Test, his scores as determined by the Gray-Votaw Achievement Tests given in previous years, and his grade markings of other years as recorded by former teachers.

The data from these sources have been evaluated and efforts have been made to determine relationships between the factors revealed and the difficulties in the written language of this particular group.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to the twenty-two eighth-grade pupils of the Pilot Point Public School for the 1950-51

school session. Also, it is limited to the possible relationship of environmental, personality, and scholastic factors, even though the teacher, along with any number of other influences, may be a most important factor.

Organization of the Study

Chapter I has stated the problem, pointing out the significance of the study, listing the sources of data and outlining the method of procedure, and suggesting the limitations. Chapter II will deal with the extent and nature of errors made by this group. Chapter III will point out possible relationships between the errors and other factors considered. Chapter IV will suggest possible improved procedures for the teaching of written language. Chapter V, the last, will summarize, pointing out conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER II

NATURE OF THE ERRORS IN WRITTEN ENGLISH AS REVEALED BY THE CALIFORNIA LANGUAGE TEST

Chapter II will define the nature of the language test administered to the pupils and will present data concerning each child's score on each part of the test, as well as give a summary of the class' scores on the different aspects measured.

In April, 1951, the twenty-two eighth-grade pupils of the Pilot Point School took the intermediate form of the California Language Test,¹ designed for seventh-, eighth-, and ninth-grade students. This test scores the pupil on his ability

- A. To use capitals correctly,
- B. To punctuate sentences,
- C. To choose grammatically correct word-forms,
- D. To recognize sentence fragments,
- E. To determine parts of speech, and
- F. To recognize misspelled words.

Section A of the test, pertaining to capitalization, includes choices involving the first word of a sentence,

¹Ernest W. Tiegs and Willis W. Clark, California Language Test (Intermediate Form AA).

proper nouns, proper adjectives, proper abbreviations, and the first word of a quotation. The total possible score on this section is fifteen.

Section B of the test measures the extent to which the student knows the uses of commas, question marks, and quotation marks. One is not penalized for over-punctuation. The total possible score on this section is ten.

Section C is made up of twenty statements. The first ten require a knowledge of number, case, tense, and good usage by the student making correct choices. The second ten statements determine the pupil's ability to recognize the elements of complete sentences. The possible score is twenty.

Section D of the test pertains to parts of speech. It consists of a sentence of twenty words: "We walk in the park almost every afternoon, and watch other small children feed doves which perch on their shoulders."² The student is told to consider how each word is used and to classify it as a part of speech, according to its use in this particular sentence. The possible score is twenty.

The next section of the test measures the pupil's ability to recognize misspelled words. Thirty sets of words, with four words in each set, are listed, and the

²Ibid., p. 5.

child is instructed to examine each set to determine which word, if any, is misspelled. The possible score is thirty.

Tables 1 and 2 represent the scores of the individual members of the class; the first table represents the work of the girls and the second, that of the boys. The scores of each group are arranged in descending order according to the grade-placement of each student.

TABLE 1

INDIVIDUAL RECORD OF EACH GIRL'S ERRORS ON THE LANGUAGE TEST, WITH HER GRADE-PLACEMENT AND HER RANK IN CLASS

Students	Errors in Capitalization	Errors in Punctuation	Errors in Grammar and Sentences	Errors in Parts of Speech	Errors in Spelling	Total Number Errors	Rank in Class	Grade-Placement
D	0	3	0	5	2	10	1	10.8
A	1	2	2	4	9	18	4	9.9
H	0	5	1	8	6	20	5	9.7
C	0	4	1	5	11	21	6	9.6
I	0	4	4	6	11	25	9.5	9.2
G	4	4	3	8	6	25	9.5	9.2
B	0	5	1	11	9	26	11.5	9.1
E	1	7	4	19	5	27	13	8.9
F	3	5	2	10	11	31	17	8.5
Total	9	39	18	67	70	203	8.5	9.4

Table 2 shows the errors on the individual record of each boy's language test. The two tables will be discussed following Table 2.

TABLE 2

INDIVIDUAL RECORD OF EACH BOY'S ERRORS ON THE LANGUAGE TEXT, WITH HIS GRADE-PLACEMENT AND HIS RANK IN CLASS

Students	Errors in Capitalization	Errors in Punctuation	Errors in Grammar and Sentences	Errors in Parts of Speech	Errors in Spelling	Total Number Errors	Rank in Class	Grade-Placement
U	0	2	3	3	3	11	2	10.7
O	0	1	0	4	11	16	3	10.1
V	0	5	3	6	10	24	7.5	9.3
W	1	4	1	5	13	24	7.5	9.3
T	1	5	0	10	10	26	11.5	9.1
R	0	5	4	10	10	29	14.5	8.7
K	4	4	0	12	9	29	14.5	8.7
L	2	4	2	13	10	31	17	8.5
Q	6	9	4	7	5	31	17	8.5
M	2	4	4	14	13	37	19	7.9
P	4	10	1	15	8	38	20	7.8
S	1	5	6	9	18	39	21	7.7
J	2	4	8	11	21	46	22	7.0
Total	23	62	36	119	140	381		8.7

As a group the girls rank higher than the boys in grade placement; the girls averaging 9.4, whereas the boys average 8.7. Too, the four weakest students of the class, according to this test, are boys, the four ranging from a grade-placement of 7.9 to one of 7.0. Therefore, the girls, as a group, hold the higher rank in the class. However, students U and O, two boys, hold second and third places as individual members of the class, and three other boys' tests indicate that they are competent students.

In Table 3 a summary of the nature and the number of errors made by the entire class on the California Language Test may be found. Not only the nature and the number of errors are shown, but the percentage of errors made by the class, the percentage of errors made by the girls as a group and that made by the boys as a group are indicated.

By way of comparison from the data tabulated in Table 3 it is interesting to note that the record of the boys and that of the girls run parallel in the order of the areas in which the errors are found, except in the case of the first two major weaknesses. Whereas the girls are weakest first in punctuation, and second in parts of speech, the boys' weaknesses in these first two areas are just reversed in order.

TABLE 3

NATURE AND NUMBER OF THE ERRORS MADE ON THE CALIFORNIA
LANGUAGE TEST BY THE EIGHTH GRADE OF THE PILOT POINT
SCHOOL IN THE SPRING SEMESTER OF 1951

Items in the Test	Possible Number of Errors	Number of Errors Made by Class	Percentage of Errors by Class	Percentage of Errors by Girls	Percentage of Errors by Boys
Capitalization	330	32	9.2	6.6	11.8
Punctuation	220	101	42.1	43.3	40.8
Word Choice-- Sentences	440	54	12	10	14
Parts of Speech	440	186	41.6	37.2	46
Spelling Errors	660	210	31	25.9	36
Total	2090	584	27.3	23.7	31

As shown in Table 3 the girls as a group made a lower per cent of errors in every part of the text than the boys, with the exception of the part testing the use of punctuation. Lee and Lee offer one explanation of the fact that girls often advance faster than boys do in their school work:

. . . The boys who are more immature physically have to compete with the girls. When their fingers do not guide the pencil as expertly . . . or when their

tired and strained little muscles rebel, and they start twisting and turning in their seats to get relief, they are branded as naughty and failures, and the superior accomplishments of the girls are held up as models. Attitudes may be developed here that will persist through all schooling. . . . From about 11 to 13 the girl is all of two years nearer her final development than is the boy.³

At another time the authors add this thought:

Maturation is a concept as important in language arts as it is in the other areas. The development of the child in his ability to deal with language is gradual. The teacher needs to be familiar with this development in order to guide him intelligently. The idea that certain skills had to be mastered in a given grade by all children has disappeared. Continuity of experience is necessary if the child is to deal with situations on an increasingly more complex level.⁴

Excessive and premature emphasis on formal correctness may prove to be an actual deterrent.⁵

Even though the percentages of errors in several sections of the test appear high, in reality they are near average for the whole test, as shown by their interpretation into grade-placement, the girls having placed 9.4 and the boys 8.7. This test was administered in April of their eighth-grade year, and the average grade-placement for the entire class was 9.0. There are no girls and only four boys who rank lower than 8.5 in grade-placement, and only two girls and four boys who rank between 8.5 and 9.0. All other members of the class rank higher than 9.0.

³Murray Lee and Dorris May Lee, The Child and His Curriculum, p. 33.

⁴Ibid., p. 329.

⁵Ibid., p. 336.

The class' greatest weakness, as revealed by this test, lies in their inability to use punctuation marks correctly. From 220 possible errors, they made 101, or in other words, they missed 42.1 per cent of the choices offered by the test. Likewise, as a class, they are very weak in their ability to determine the parts of speech of words in a given sentence. From 440 possible errors, they committed 119, or, in other words, they were unable to identify 41.6 per cent of the words as to their uses as parts of speech in this particular sentence.

The third weakness of the class, as determined by this test, is their failure to recognize misspelled words. From 660 sets of words, with four words to each set, they failed to determine the occurrence of errors in 210, or they failed on 31 per cent of the sets of words.

In the section of the test requiring a knowledge of number, case, tense, good usage, and sentence elements, the class made a better showing. Of 440 possible errors, only 54 were made, which represents but 12 per cent of the whole.

The class were strongest in their ability to use capital letters correctly. Of 330 possible errors, only 32 were made, representing 9.2 per cent.

This chapter has pointed out the errors, as revealed by the California Language Test, in the written English

of the eighth-grade pupils of the Pilot Point Public School, for the spring semester of 1951. The record of the errors of each student, along with his grade-placement and his rank in the class have been presented. In addition, the record of the whole class in the percentage of errors made on the test has been given in order to point out the weaknesses and the strengths of the class.

CHAPTER III

POSSIBLE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ERRORS IN WRITTEN ENGLISH AND CERTAIN MENTAL, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND PERSONALITY FACTORS

In Chapter II the results of the California Language Test have been given. In Chapter III results of tests, other than the language test, will be given and efforts will be made to point out possible relationships among certain factors. The first part of the chapter deals with the nature of the mental maturity test administered and data obtained from it. The second and third parts of the chapter present the data from the socio-economic survey and from the personality test, respectively. The last part of the chapter is devoted to attempts to relate errors in written language to certain mental, environmental, and personality factors.

The Mental Maturity Test

After the California Language Test was administered to the eighth-grade pupils, and the main errors of the individual students, as well as those of the class as a whole, were determined, further tests were given with the intention of attempting to relate these errors to certain factors. The first given was the California Short-Form

Test of Mental Maturity, since mental factors are considered of prime importance. The test may be considered in two main divisions, the language factors comprising one and the non-language factors the other. The language factors include inference, numerical quantity, and verbal concepts. The non-language factors include sensing right and left, manipulation of areas, similarities, and number series. The authors of the test offer these ideas as to the values of the two sections:

The language test data are particularly useful in indicating how well the individual understands relationships expressed in words, such as instructions, conference discussions, statements of logical principles or courses of action, and the like.

The non-language test data indicate how well the individual understands relationships among things or objects when no language or a minimum amount of language is involved, such as physical or mechanical relationships.

Individuals may possess these two kinds of mental ability in very different degrees. It is not unusual for a person to have a language I.Q. of 70 or 80 and to have a non-language I.Q. above 100. Similarly, the reverse is frequently the case.¹

By the California Mental Maturity Test three I.Q.'s for each student are determined; these are (1) the I.Q. for the non-language factors, (2) the I.Q. for the language factors, and (3) the I.Q. for the preceding two combined, or the total-mental factors.

¹Elizabeth T. Sullivan, W. W. Clark, and E. W. Tiegs, Manual: California Short-Form Test of Mental Maturity, p. 7.

In Table 4 data from this test are recorded for each student.

TABLE 4

INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENTS OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS FOR LANGUAGE FACTORS, NON-LANGUAGE FACTORS, AND TOTAL MENTAL FACTORS IN THE CALIFORNIA SHORT-FORM TEST OF MENTAL MATURITY, AND THE PERCENTILE RANK OF EACH STUDENT FOR THE CALIFORNIA LANGUAGE TEST

Student	Language Factors	Non-Language Factors	Total Mental Factors	California Language Test
	I.Q.	I.Q.	I.Q.	Percentile Rank
K	121	121	121	50
D	109	111	110	85
C	115	100	110	70
O	106	107	109	75
U	108	104	108	85
T	111	91	105	60
N	105	103	105	60
M	102	102	102	30
F	101	99	101	40
G	104	95	101	60
A	100	100	100	75
V	99	99	99	60
L	97	101	98	40
H	102	89	98	70
R	98	96	97	50
Q	108	71	94	40
J	90	101	93	15
S	92	91	91	30
I	89	92	90	60
B	92	77	87	60
P	89	81	86	30
E	82	84	83	50

As a matter of convenience in comparing these scores with his ability in written language, each student's percentile rank from the California Language Test is shown.

This table is arranged in descending order, as determined by the I.Q.'s from the total-mental factors.

While the I.Q.'s for the language factors and those for the non-language do not vary much for some of the students, for other students they vary to a marked degree. For example, student K, as shown in Table 4, has an I.Q. of 121 for both language factors and for non-language factors, whereas student Q's test data indicate an I.Q. of 108 for language factors and only 71 for non-language factors.

The authors of the test by which the I.Q.'s were determined define mental maturity and make pertinent remarks concerning its being measured:

Some of the ways in which intelligence or mental maturity may be defined are: brightness, mental power, ability to understand relationships, ability to profit from experience. Early students thought that it could be measured on a vertical scale like pupil height.

However, it was soon discovered that individuals with identical mental ages or intelligence quotients did not have the same abilities and did not succeed equally well.

Thorndike and others pointed out that this concept was too simple and among the new dimensions or aspects of intelligence which they suggested were the speed with which an individual works and the difficulty of the tasks which he can perform. These and other contributions led to extensive factor analysis studies which seem to indicate that intelligence consists of a number of relatively independent factors.

In measuring evidences of intelligence, a score is first obtained either from a whole test or from some major part of a test. This score is then expressed in terms of a mental age. Mental age means mental ability equal to that possessed by the average or typical individual of a given age group.

Thus if a large representative number of pupils who were 12 years, 6 months old chronologically made an average score of 130 on a particular intelligence test, any other individual who subsequently makes a score of 130 on this intelligence test would be said to have a mental age of 12 years, 6 months.

Another measure is also used in designating intelligence: namely, the Intelligence Quotient (I.Q.). The Intelligence Quotient is obtained by dividing the Mental Age by the Actual or Chronological Age. It is therefore a ratio and shows the rate at which a particular individual is developing mental ability. Thus the individual who is 8 years old chronologically but has a mental age of 10 years has an I.Q. of 125 and is developing at a rate 25% faster than the average child.²

Thus, by the use of the California Short-Form Test of Mental Maturity the intelligence quotient of each eighth-grade student was determined. When the individual student's score is expressed in terms of his mental age, and this mental age is divided by his chronological age, the result represents his intelligence quotient. In Table 5 the results of the mental maturity test are given. Given, also, are the possible score, each student's score, his mental age, his chronological age, his intelligence quotient, his intelligence grade-placement, and his rank in class. This table is arranged in descending order according to the intelligence quotient of the members of the class.

²Ibid., p. 5.

TABLE 5

RESULTS OF THE MENTAL MATURITY TEST

Pupil	Possible Score	Students Score	Mental Age	Chrono-logical Age	I. Q.	Grade-Place-ment	Rank in class
K	145	121	189	156	121	10.1	1
D	145	119	186	168	110	9.9	2.5
C	145	116	182	165	110	9.6	2.5
O	145	119	186	170	109	9.9	4
U	145	120	188	174	108	10.0	5
T	145	115	180	171	105	9.5	6.5
N	145	115	180	171	105	9.5	6.5
M	145	107	170	166	102	8.8	8
F	145	112	177	175	101	9.3	9.5
G	145	101	162	160	101	8.2	9.5
A	145	110	175	174	100	9.1	11
V	145	107	170	171	99	8.8	12
L	145	113	178	180	98	9.4	13.5
H	145	102	164	167	98	8.3	13.5
R	145	108	171	177	97	8.9	15
Q	145	101	162	172	94	8.2	16
J	145	104	166	177	93	8.5	17
S	145	104	166	182	91	8.5	18
I	145	96	156	175	90	7.7	19
B	145	90	149	172	87	7.1	20
P	145	100	161	187	86	8.1	21
E	145	93	153	185	83	7.4	22

In order to group the pupils according to their intelligence quotients, a plan for a classification chart found in the manual accompanying the California Short-Form

Test of Mental Maturity is used for Table 6. The students are divided into six groups: (1) very superior, with I.Q.'s of 130 and above; (2) superior, with I.Q.'s from 115-129; (3) high average, with I.Q.'s from 100-114; (4) low average, with I.Q.'s from 85-99; (5) inferior, with I.Q.'s from 70-84; and (6) very inferior, with I.Q.'s below 70.

Table 6

CLASSIFICATION OF THE EIGHTH-GRADE PUPILS ACCORDING TO THEIR INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENTS AND A COMPARISON OF THE PERCENTAGES IN EACH GROUP WITH THOSE OF THE TYPICAL POPULATION

Descriptive Classification	Intelligence Quotient	Number of Students	Per Cent of Typical Population	Per Cent of Eighth-Grade
Very superior	130 and above	0	3	0
Superior	115-129	1	12	4.5
High average	100-114	10	35	45.5
Low average	85- 99	10	35	45.5
Inferior	70- 84	1	12	4.5
Very inferior	Below 70	0	3	0
Total		22	100	100

As seen in Table 6 most of the students in the eighth-grade are in the high-average and the low-average groups, there being but one in the superior group and one in the inferior group. The percentages do not run parallel to those quoted by the authors for the typical population, since most of our students are in the average groups.

The Socio-Economic Survey

In addition to information obtained from the mental maturity tests, data relative to the home environment of each student were available from a socio-economic survey made by the school in the fall term of the 1950-51 school session. Pertinent information from this survey is given in Table 7. Students from farm homes are listed together, as are those living in town.

Table 7 shows that most of the children included in this study are from farm homes. Standards of living of the entire class, insofar as external factors are concerned, would be very much the same, for the town is a very small one in the heart of a large farming district, and the town offers few conveniences which the rural children, with few exceptions, do not enjoy. Another point of interest is that not one of the children is a newcomer. All have lived in this community and have attended this school for at least three years, and most of them have spent their whole school-lives here.

Table 7
 INFORMATION FROM A SOCIO-ECONOMIC SURVEY MADE BY
 THE SCHOOL IN THE FALL OF 1950

Student	Source of Income	Running Water	Elec- tricity	Car	Gas	Miles from School	Number of Years at this Home	Number of Magazines	Own or Rent	Number of Acres	Number of Children in Family
C	Farm	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	8.5	Life	5	Own	200	6
D	Farm	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	6.5	Life	8	Own	200	2
E	Farm	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	8	10	Many	Rent	200	4
G	Farm	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	10	7	2	Own	150	5
I	Farm	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	4.5	Life	7	Own	125	2
J	Farm	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	1	Life	4	Own	140	4
K	Farm	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	3.5	5	Many	Own	160	4
L	Farm	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	2	9	Many	Rent	1040	13
M	Farm	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	2	9	Many	Rent	1040	13
N	Farm	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	7.5	Life	Many	Rent	250	7
O	Farm	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	7	Life	Many	Rent	150	4
U	Farm	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	3.5	Life	Many	Own	117	3
V	Farm	No	Yes	No	No	5	Life	2	Rent	168	4
A	City										
	Water Works	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Town	Life	Many	Own	2	4
B	Day Labor	No	Yes	Yes	No	8.5	10	2	Rent	...	8
F	Carpentry	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Town	Life	9	Own	132	2
H	Feed Sales	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Town	4	Many	Own	125	3

TABLE 7--CONTINUED

Student	Source of Income	Running Water	Elec- tricity	Car	Gas	Miles from School	Number of Years at This Home	Number of Magazines	Own or Rent	Number of Acres	Number of Children in Family
P	Mother Laundry Work	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Town	Life	1	Rent	..	7
Q	Day Labor	No	Yes	Yes	No	1.5	12	1	Rent	..	7
R	Carpentry	No	Yes	Yes	No	8	3	2	Rent	100	6
S	Garage	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Town	Life	Many	Own	5	14
T	Mother Widow	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Town	Life	1	Own	..	3

Table 7 also shows that not one of the children is an only child, and most of them are from homes where there are several children. All of the pupils have access to radios and most of them have many magazines and newspapers in the homes. It may be concluded that all of the children are from middle-class, rural families who have the common conveniences of living.

The Personality Test

In addition to information obtained from the mental maturity tests and from the socio-economic survey, data were taken from the results of the California Test of Personality, which was administered to the eighth-grade students. As to the necessity for such a test the authors write:

. . . Accumulating evidence reveals the fact that beneath the relatively calm exterior of children are problems, frustrations, and conflicts just as difficult for them to face as are the problems with which adults wrestle from day to day. We cannot continue the old-fashioned waste of allowing large numbers to develop serious nervous and mental difficulties until none but highly trained psychologists and psychiatrists can help them.³

The personality test used for this study is divided into two main parts, self-adjustment and social-adjustment, and each division has subtopics. The test could be outlined in this way:

³Reported by the Editorial Staff, California Test Bureau, California Test of Personality, Summary of Investigations, No. 1, p. 3.

I. Self-adjustment

- A. Self-reliance
- B. Sense of personal worth
- C. Sense of personal freedom
- D. Feeling of belonging
- E. Freedom from withdrawing-tendencies
- F. Freedom from nervous symptoms

II. Social-adjustment

- A. Social standards
- B. Social skills
- C. Freedom from anti-social tendencies
- D. Family relations
- E. School relations
- F. Community relations

The sum total of the scores on the twelve subdivisions is referred to as the total-adjustment score.

The results of the personality test are recorded in Table 8, in which each student's scores for self-adjustment factors, for social-adjustment factors, and for total-adjustment factors are given. The students' scores are entered according to class rank on this particular test.

TABLE 8
RESULTS OF THE PERSONALITY TEST

Stu- dent	Self-adjustment Factors			Social-adjustment Factors			Total-adjustment Factors			Rank in Class
	Possi- ble Score	Stu- dent's Score	Percen- tile Rank	Possi- ble Score	Stu- dent's Score	Percen- tile Rank	Possi- ble Score	Stu- dent's Score	Percen- tile Rank	
U	90	85	95	90	97	95	180	172	95	1
E	90	82	85	90	80	75	180	162	80	2
V	90	79	75	90	81	80	180	160	80	3
F	90	78	70	90	80	75	180	158	75	4
G	90	77	70	90	80	75	180	157	75	5
C	90	75	60	90	78	70	180	153	65	6
N	90	72	50	90	78	70	180	150	60	7
T	90	75	60	90	73	50	180	148	55	8
P	90	70	40	90	76	60	180	146	50	9
R	90	64	25	90	76	60	180	140	40	10
A	90	66	30	90	73	50	180	139	40	11
I	90	70	40	90	68	35	180	138	40	12
D	90	59	15	90	73	50	180	132	30	13
H	90	59	15	90	70	40	180	129	25	14
B	90	50	10	90	66	30	180	116	15	15
J	90	60	20	90	54	10	180	114	15	16
L	90	49	10	90	64	25	180	113	15	17
Q	90	55	10	90	58	15	180	113	15	18
S	90	54	10	90	49	5	180	103	10	19
M	90	37	5	90	56	10	180	93	5	20
O	90	37	5	90	41	1	180	78	5	21
K	90	22	1	90	48	5	180	70	1	22

As seen in Table 8 the students are in very low percentile ranks in both self-adjustment and in social-adjustment factors. Only seven of the twenty-two are above the fiftieth percentile rank in self-adjustment and only nine are above the fiftieth percentile rank in social-adjustment.

Possible Relationships

The following tables and comments are so planned that possible relationships may be sought between the errors revealed by the language tests and any one, or more, of the many factors revealed by the other tests.

As seen from Table 6 most of the students in the eighth-grade belong to the high-average or to the low-average groups, as defined by the classifications used in that table. Table 9 shows the percentile ranks in mental maturity, in language, and in total-adjustment of the ten students who are in the high-average group.

The first five of the ten students in the high-average group are in high percentile ranks on all three tests given, which fact seems to indicate that mental maturity, language skills, and personality are closely related. Of the latter five students represented in this table, three are in high percentile ranks in English but in low ranks in total-adjustment; one is below average in English but very high in total-adjustment; and the last is low in both.

TABLE 9

PERCENTILE RANKS OF THE TEN EIGHTH-GRADE STUDENTS
WHO ARE IN THE HIGH-AVERAGE GROUP ACCORDING
TO THEIR INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENTS

Student	Mental Maturity		Language	Total-Adjustment
	Perce- tile Rank	Intelli- gence Quotient	Perce- tile Rank	Percentile Rank
C	70	110	70	65
U	70	108	85	95
N	60	105	60	60
T	60	105	60	55
G	50	101	60	75
D	70	110	85	30
O	70	109	75	5
A	50	100	75	40
F	50	101	40	75
M	50	102	30	5

An overall picture of Table 9 indicates that there may be a closer relationship between high intelligence quotients and language abilities than between personality factors and language abilities. However, the number of students represented is too small to more than point out a possibility, especially when attention is called to the record of Student F and of Student M.

In addition to the fact that these students belong to the same classification as to intelligence quotients, their socio-economic backgrounds are similar. By referring to Table 7 it is apparent that all are from homes which offer about the same conveniences and the same security. Each has attended this same school all his school-life, and each has access to the radio and to magazines. Student T lives in town with his mother, who is a widow, but who owns her home. He, like the others, has attended this same school since he started, and he, like the others, seems to have reasons to feel secure.

Table 10 shows the percentile ranks in mental maturity, in language, and in total-adjustment of the ten students who are in the low-average group, according to the classifications used in Table 6.

An examination of the record of the first five students represented in Table 10 indicates that neither a high intelligence quotient nor proper adjustment is necessary to language ability, except for Student V's scores. But, in reality, the I.Q.'s as they occur in the language section of the mentality test are not so low as they appear here. A study of Table 4 reveals that Student B, whose total I.Q. is only 87, has an I.Q. of 92 in the language-factors section of the mental maturity test. Student H, who is in the seventieth percentile rank on the California Language Test, has an I.Q. of 102 in the language-factors

section of the mental maturity test. If language ability is related to mental factors, or to personality factors, one would conclude that the first five of these ten students are hard workers, with fine attitudes and with fine encouragement from home.

TABLE 10

PERCENTILE RANKS OF THE TEN EIGHTH-GRADE STUDENTS WHO ARE IN THE LOW-AVERAGE GROUP ACCORDING TO THEIR INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENTS

Student	Mental Maturity		Language	Total-Adjustment
	Percentile Rank	Intelligence Quotient	Percentile Rank	Percentile Rank
V	50	99	60	80
B	20	87	60	15
R	40	97	50	40
I	30	90	60	40
H	50	98	70	25
P	20	86	30	50
Q	40	94	40	15
L	50	98	40	15
J	40	93	15	15
S	30	91	30	10

The last five records in Table 10 seem to point out a close relationship between language ability and mental maturity, as well as between language ability and total-adjustment scores, or there may be an indication of a close relationship among the three. It would seem that Student L, according to his percentile rank in mental maturity, could score higher in language ability, if the two are related, but it is possible that other factors enter in, in his particular case. For example, he has a younger brother in the same class, and this fact may have a strong influence on his attitudes and on his performance.

A further examination of Table 9 and Table 10 shows that there are seven students in low percentile ranks according to the California Language Test; namely, Students F, M, P, Q, L, J. and S. These seven students are consistently poor in parts of the personality test, especially that part related to self-adjustment. Table 11 records their scores on this part of the California Personality Test.

TABLE 11

PERCENTILE RANKINGS FROM THE SELF-ADJUSTMENT DIVISION OF
 THE CALIFORNIA PERSONALITY TEST FOR THE SEVEN
 STUDENTS WHO ARE IN LOW PERCENTILE RANKS
 AS DETERMINED BY THE CALIFORNIA
LANGUAGE TEST

Areas	Students						
	F	M	P	Q	L	J	S
Self-reliance	25	15	15	10	15	25	1
Sense of personal worth	85	1	70	10	10	15	15
Sense of personal freedom	90	50	90	50	90	70	15
Feeling of belonging	65	10	90	15	20	15	30
Freedom from withdrawing tendencies	85	5	15	20	5	50	30
Freedom from nervous symptoms	50	1	35	15	1	5	25

Of the seven students, whose records appear in Table 11 and who are weakest of the whole class in English according to the language test given, not one is above the 25 percentile rank in self-reliance. This part of the personality test consists of the following questions:

1. Do you keep on working even if the job is
 hard? Yes No

- | | | | |
|-----|---|-----|----|
| 2. | Is it hard for you to be calm when things go wrong? | Yes | No |
| 3. | Does it usually bother you when people do not agree with you? | Yes | No |
| 4. | When you are around strange people do you usually feel uneasy? | Yes | No |
| 5. | Is it easy for you to admit it when you are in the wrong? | Yes | No |
| 6. | Do you have to be reminded often to finish your work? | Yes | No |
| 7. | Do you often think about the kind of work you want to do when you grow up? | Yes | No |
| 8. | Do you feel bad when your classmates make fun of you? | Yes | No |
| 9. | Is it easy for you to meet or introduce people? | Yes | No |
| 10. | Do you usually feel sorry for yourself when you get hurt? | Yes | No |
| 11. | Do you find it easier to do what your friends plan than to make your own plans? | Yes | No |
| 12. | Do you find that most people try to boss you? | Yes | No |
| 13. | Is it easy for you to talk to important people? | Yes | No |
| 14. | Do your friends often cheat you in games? | Yes | No |

15. Do you usually finish the things that
you start? Yes No

It seems that the failure to pass this test may be due to poor attitudes which, in turn, may have a direct relationship to poor English grades. It may be that the pupils are failing to receive help in developing proper attitudes from their homes or from their school.

Five of the seven students represented in Table 11 do not score higher than the fifteenth percentile rank on the part of the test pertaining to personal worth. The questions from this part of the California Test of Personality are:

16. Are you often invited to parties where
both boys and girls are present? Yes No
17. Do you find that a good many people are
mean? Yes No
18. Do most of your friends seem to think
that you are brave or strong? Yes No
19. Are you often asked to help plan
parties? Yes No
20. Do people seem to think that you have
good ideas? Yes No
21. Are your friends usually interested in
what you are doing? Yes No
22. Are people often unfair to you? Yes No

23. Do your classmates seem to think you are
as bright as they are? Yes No
24. Are the other students glad that you are
in their class? Yes No
25. Do both boys and girls seem to like you? Yes No
26. Do you have a hard time doing most of
the things you try? Yes No
27. Do you feel that people do not treat
you as well as they should? Yes No
28. Do many of the people you know seem to
dislike you? Yes No
29. Do people seem to think you are going
to do well when you grow up? Yes No
30. Do you find that people do not treat
you very well? Yes No

This test, too, may point to a lack of proper attitudes on the part of the students which may result in poor school work, including that of English. But this lack would indicate failure on the part of someone. Or, if these students have not been given a sense of personal worth, someone has failed, and it behooves the school to do its part in correcting the situation.

All the pupils represented in Table 11, even though they rank very low in total-adjustment, score above the fiftieth percentile rank in personal freedom. This

outcome may indicate that these students are allowed so much freedom that they spend their time unwisely, giving less time and thought to school work, including that of language, than they should.

Scoring low on other parts of the test may indicate poor attitudes, but the section relating to freedom from nervous symptoms seems to be a summary of what the child thinks of his own physical condition. Such questions as the following, taken from the California Personality Test, are devised to obtain this information.

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| 76. Do you frequently have sneezing spells? | Yes | No |
| 77. Do you sometimes stutter when you get excited? | Yes | No |
| 78. Are you often bothered by headaches? | Yes | No |
| 79. Are you often not hungry even at meal time? | Yes | No |
| 80. Do you usually find it hard to sit still? | Yes | No |
| 81. Do your eyes hurt often? | Yes | No |
| 82. Do you often have to ask people to repeat what they just said? | Yes | No |
| 83. Do you often forget what you are reading? | Yes | No |
| 84. Are you sometimes troubled because your muscles twitch? | Yes | No |
| 85. Do you find that many people do not speak clearly enough for you to hear them well? | Yes | No |

- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| 86. Are you troubled because of having many
colds? | Yes | No |
| 87. Do most people consider you restless? | Yes | No |
| 88. Do you usually find it hard to go to
sleep? | Yes | No |
| 89. Are you tired much of the time? | Yes | No |
| 90. Are you often troubled by night-
mares or bad dreams? | Yes | No |

Some of the students represented in Table 11 may have real physical defects which affect their school work. Others may not really be ill, but may think they are. One writer comments:

If a student thinks he is in poor health, and is, it is important. If he thinks he is in poor health, and is not, it is possibly even more important. If his difficulty comes from a disorder such as poor eyesight, infected tonsils, or constipation, the chances are that his difficulty will be diagnosed and cured. If his difficulty has its origin in such basic organic disturbances as may, for example, have a glandular origin, it is less likely to be diagnosed and corrected although the chances of its being corrected are increasing daily. If, however, the difficulty is not organic but comes from a deep-seated psychological disturbance the chances of diagnosis and correction are very much less.⁴

In another place the same author adds:

. . . a student may be suffering from slightly infected tonsils to a degree that he seldom feels

⁴Kenneth L. Heaton and Vivian Weedon, The Failing Student, p. 114.

quite well though never ill enough to have his tonsils out, or he may suffer from mild digestional upsets which are time-consuming and annoying, but which are not serious enough to be corrected. The latter conditions may hinder scholarship more than the former.⁵

Four of the seven students referred to in Table 11 answered "yes" to the question "Are you often bothered by headaches?" Five answered "yes" to "Are you often not hungry even at meal time?" Four answered "yes" to "Do your eyes hurt often?" Five answered "yes" to "Do you often have to ask people to repeat what they just said?" Six of the seven answered in the affirmative to "Do you find that many people do not speak clearly enough for you to hear them well?" Three of the seven answered in the affirmative to "Are you tired much of the time?" Any one of these answers could possibly indicate a condition that needs correcting, and one that has direct effect upon the student's doing his school work well.

In addition to the possibilities of relationships pointed out for certain groups, there are indications of individual problems. For example, Student D, a girl with high scholastic records, ranks only in the thirtieth percentile on the personality test whereas she is in the 85 percentile rank in the language scores and in the seventieth percentile rank on the mental maturity test. Examining her personality test scores, it is noted that she is in

⁵Ibid., p. 152.

the fiftieth percentile rank on the section of the test given to social-adjustment, but she is only in the fifteenth percentile rank on the part relating to self-adjustment. She is very low on self-reliance, on sense of personal worth, and on freedom-from-withdrawing tendencies. Since she is very tall, and not very attractive, it is possible that these conditions have shaken her self-esteem, and measures should be taken to help her build her self-confidence that she may continue to be the strong student that she has been in spite of these handicaps.

Student H is a second girl whose records would indicate that she should rank higher than the fifteenth percentile in self-adjustment. If there is one in the class whose parents are able to offer their child more than average, in a socio-economic way, it is she. She is in high-percentile ranks in both language abilities and in mental maturity. Her test folder reveals that she answered significant questions in the affirmative:

61. Have you noticed that many people do and say mean things?
63. Do you know people who are so unreasonable that you hate them?
65. Have you found that many people do not mind hurting your feelings?
67. Have you often found that older people had it in for you?

69. Do you often feel lonesome even with people around you?
70. Have you often noticed that people do not treat you as fairly as they should?
71. Do you worry a lot because you have so many problems?
74. Do you often feel like crying because of the way people neglect you?

Her affirmative answers to the above questions make it appear that she is very unhappy either at home or at school or both. Her test folder on family relations reveals that she answered in the affirmative to the following questions.

143. Do members of your family start quarrels with you often?
147. Do you find it difficult to please your folks?
148. Have you often felt as though you would rather not live at home?
149. Do you sometimes feel that no one at home cares about you?

These answers may be related to the fact that her intelligence quotient is a little below average, whereas she has driven herself, or she has been driven, to attain high goals, such as the seventieth percentile in the language score. Or, she may feel that homefolks and/or

teachers are expecting much of her, maybe more than she is really capable of doing. She shares the feeling indicated toward Homefolks with teachers, as shown by her affirmative answers to these questions:

153. Is some of your school work so hard that you are in danger of failing?
154. Have you often thought that some teachers care little about their students?
156. Are some of the teachers so strict that it makes school work too hard?
158. Have you often thought that some of the teachers are unfair?
160. Would you be happier in school if the teachers were kinder?

Of course, there are other students who answered these questions in the affirmative, but most of the class did not. Student K, the boy who has the highest intelligence quotient in the class, 121, according to the mental maturity test given, is in only the first percentile rank in total adjustment. He answered all the questions quoted in the two groups directly above in the affirmative, and many more such questions which reflect the same feelings. A study of the data available does not seem to justify such feelings. It is known that the children older than he from his family have excelled in school, so that it

seems feasible that some attitude in the home may augment this condition.

In all the efforts made to relate these factors to language work, little has been said concerning the environmental factors. A study of Table 7 shows that the external pictures of home environment are so uniform that few conclusions may be drawn concerning them. Many writers point out the important effect that home and community exercise over the youth. One writer names several of these influences:

The neighborhood educates us all. . . . We are educated by the ways in which we respond to the stimulations of the world about us. . . .

Religious institutions and activities educate. Even those who "have no interests" in religion are educated by their denials. . . .⁶

Civic conditions of all kinds educate. . . . Politics makes us burn with political ardor, or with sham enthusiasms, or turns us into cynics. . . .

The street educates. Shop windows . . . flaunting objects that we desire and cannot afford--all this educates us. . . .

Beauty and ugliness all about us educate us. Our homes, our streets, our communities show us beauty or sordidness and tend to make us long for beauty or to be satisfied with the sordid. . . .

Our group memberships educate us. . . . when we belong to many groups we become rich with their offerings to us and filled with the conflicts engendered by them. When we are excluded from groups we suffer and compensate in more or less healthful ways, and we find happiness when we achieve membership in social classes, racial groups. . . . We are largely products of our group relationships.

⁶Joseph Kinmont Hart, Social Interpretation of Education, p. 250.

We are educated by our experiences with authority or lack of it; by our dealings with arbitrary individuals, by orders imposed upon us, by efforts to control us, to break us, or to teach us; by our compliances and our resistances. . . .

We are educated by our longings, our friendships, our aspirations, our reverence, our satisfied and unsatisfied desires. . . .⁷

. . . . He (the child of today) is the product of the group. Just as his physical body is a product of the physical life of the group, so his emotional and moral being, and, in large measure, his intellectual life, or lack of it, will be the product of the group's emotional, moral, and intellectual life, or lack of it. . . .⁸

While these influences are not known for each pupil, it is known that this particular group of students have had the same school environment, so far as tangible factors are concerned, as their records show that each has been in this school for many years, and most of them have been here throughout their school careers.

In this chapter attempts have been made to point out possible relationships between language abilities of the eighth-grade students of the Pilot Point School and certain factors as revealed by mental maturity tests, personality tests, and socio-economic surveys. It has shown many such possibilities which should stimulate thought on the part of those associated with this class.

⁷Ibid., pp. 252-253.

⁸Ibid., p. 267.

CHAPTER IV

IMPROVING THE TEACHING OF WRITTEN LANGUAGE

In the preceding chapters an attempt has been made to determine the extent and nature of errors in written language among the eighth-grade students of the Pilot Point Public School and to point out possible relationships between these errors and certain mental, personality, and environmental factors. This chapter has as its purpose the outlining of possible improved procedures in the teaching of written language to this particular group of students.

In current literature many new trends in the teaching of language are to be found. As one educator states:

There was a time . . . when, dictated in general by the requirements for passing college-entrance examinations, courses of study gave a definite, inflexible program, listing exactly what should be done by each pupil at each grade level of the elementary and the secondary schools. The pupil's lack of knowledge of the designated essentials resulted in his failure to make a passing grade in the subject. At present there are still many who believe that lack of proficiency in the ability to use English effectively--particularly among secondary-school graduates--is due in large measure to an absence of such specifics in the average course of study today.

Opposed to this school of thought is one which says that, since human beings vary so greatly in both the ability to learn and in why they need to learn for living effectively, it is impossible to

designate just when every child shall master certain skills which will enable him to be promoted to the succeeding grade. Must a child who has demonstrated marked improvement in attitudes and skills be penalized, they ask, by having to meet definite requirements for promotion at a given time? Will he not be discouraged by being left behind as his classmates go on to the next grade? Why not do away with grades entirely and let a child be rewarded by promotion if he has done the very best work of which he is capable?¹

While there are those who are not so vehement in their denials of the values to be derived from the formal English of earlier days, most of the educators and teachers of language, writing in recent years, are sure that the course of study must be very flexible, designed to meet the needs and the interests of each individual child. Some of the pupils hope to go to college, others just want to "preapre for life," while others are not sure of any purpose. In addition, there are great differences in abilities, in backgrounds, and in physiques. The one who wrote the following excerpt could have had our eighth-grade in mind:

Here, to her freshmen, she had to supply fare which Lathan, I.Q. 79, could digest and which Raymond, I.Q. 140, would find stimulating. She had to help Shirley Q. pronounce and define "syllable," and she had to suggest further reading for Shirley T., who had just finished Henry Esmond. . . . The class differed from one another no less in size and degree of physical and social maturity than they did

¹Blanche Trezevant, "Problems in Articulating English Courses of Study," English Journal, XXXVII (1948), 182.

in other respects. Fred, gangling basketball hopeful, who dated sophomore girls. Little Frank, who still sang soprano, Verna, the two-hundred-pound country girl whose size made her resent school, resent the teacher, resent her classmates. Doris, who had never been out of the county. The much-traveled Luther. Carol Sue, who knew both too much and too little about life.²

There is reason then to believe that the course of study should be very flexible; that there should be homogeneous grouping of students, insofar as such organization can be deemed practical in a particular situation; that grade-lines should be erased as conditions permit; and that, more and more provision must be made for individual differences of students.

But, in spite of the fact that the program should be flexible, that provision should be made for individual differences, and homogeneous grouping should be practiced, there are some aims that are common to all students. One writer lists these general aims as follows:

Through both reading and expression we want them to learn how to think critically, to master the processes of scientific thought necessary to the solution of the problems of modern life. We want them to be proficient in the basic skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening, that they may participate intelligently in the affairs of democracy and communicate effectively in the personal, social, and business relationships of life.³

²J. N. Hook, "Each Is an Island: Individual Differences in the English Classes in Littleville," English Journal, XXXVII (1948), 182.

³Dora V. Smith, "Basic Considerations in Curriculum Making in the Language Arts," English Journal, XXXVII (1948), 9.

However, it may not be that these are new aims to replace the old. It may be that teachers all through the elementary school have recognized these general aims as their own. The question is: What course shall be pursued in attempting to realize these aims? There are those who would discard most of the old, including the emphasizing of formal grammar. One writer comments in these words:

In the teaching of language and grammar we badly need a housecleaning. . . . The first candidate for eviction is the ancient and wobbly theory that instruction in formal grammar is essential to the effective use of English in speech and writing. There is no evidence to be gathered by reputable means to show that grammar in any way improves the normal speech and writing habits of pupils. . . . There is evidence that the teaching of grammar actually inhibits growth in the successful use of language by consuming large blocks of time which should be given to the practice of speaking and writing. There is a place for grammar in the secondary-school curriculum, a minor place, delayed to those years after basic habits are established and when the ambitious student seeks new patterns of sentences in which to make fresh and lively his own ideas. Even then the time given to grammar will be wasted unless the new curriculum shows how to make grammar a creative process of building sentences. . . .

Second on the list for the junkman are all the textbooks, workbooks, drill pads, and practice sheets which attempt to teach usage, grammar, and composition by the dissection and mutilation of printed sentences. More time is wasted currently in our schools by these inventions of misguided zeal than by any other means. Why is it, after some decades of blank-filling, crossing-out of words, changing or re-writing of sentences in books, with all too evident failure to teach effective expression, we still continue to buy and to use them in large quantities? The new curriculum must somehow make crystal clear the obvious but

most easily forgotten truth that the only way to learn to speak is to speak, and the only way to learn to write is to write. . . . The new curriculum must show us how to make every exercise a creative and functional use of English for a genuine purpose.⁴

Possibly formal grammar has been stressed too much. Maybe too much dependence has been placed upon "textbooks, workbooks, drill pads, and practice sheets which attempt to teach usage, grammar, and composition by the dissection and mutilation of printed sentences."⁵ Perhaps new approaches are needed in the teaching of the language arts and, more than likely, the work should be made far more creative and functional.

Among other things many educators agree that the approaches made should be positive rather than negative. One author expresses this thought thus: "The methods used to teach language improvement should be positive in their aim, not negative-based, that is, not on the detection and correction of errors but on a study of the resources of language."⁶ Robert C. Pooley expresses the same idea:

. . . But in creative teaching the emphasis will be on the communication and on the errors only as impediments to successful communications. The taking of errors out of their context, the drilling of errors and corrections in isolation from real language uses, the filling-in of blanks and crossing-out of words, the dreary reading of textbook exercises must give way to live and lively English.⁷

¹Robert C. Pooley, "These Things Shall Not Pass," English Journal, XXXV (1946), 80.

²Ibid.

³Luella Cook, "Teaching Grammar and Usage in Relation to Speech and Writing," English Journal, XXV (1946), 188.

⁴Pooley, op. cit., p. 80.

Many writers in current literature agree that the approach to teaching grammar should be inductive rather than deductive. Luella Cook states:

By the inductive rule principle I mean ending with a rule . . . rather than beginning with it. You start with experience and observation and permit pupils to draw conclusions.⁸

The best way to help our pupils reach these goals is through guided observation of what happens when certain words are put together in various ways. Such guided observation I have called an inductive approach to language study, as contrasted with a deductive approach, in which pupils are asked to accept a rule as stated and then apply it, rather than to share in the joy of discovery of what it means in relation to their own experience.⁹

Another point which needs to be kept in mind is that it might be possible to help students who need help most by making greater efforts to fit the curriculum to the needs and the interests of each child. This need has been recognized and voiced by many educators. As one says,

. . . what we need to do . . . is to take our eyes off the list of grammatical terms and fix them upon the learner. What we choose to teach. . . we should teach in harmony with established principles of habit formation, with attention to economy, interest, and permanence; so that we shall not be caught at one extreme, sending our bright students into college innocent of grammar we wish to teach, to whom, at what approximate grade level; and let us go about our carefully mapped curriculum not from the viewpoint of the learning habits of the child. Let us go beyond mere analysis to the habit-techniques that show the pupil how to make sense with power and even beauty. . .¹⁰

⁸Luella B. Cook, "An Inductive Approach," English Journal, XXXVII (1948), 16.

⁹Ibid., p. 21.

¹⁰Rachel Salisbury, "Grammar and the Law of Learning," English Journal, XXXV (1946), 249.

In attempting to make the curriculum child-centered, it is believed that any composition work should have real significance to the pupil and that most of it should spring from his own personal experience. As one educator writes:

To train boys and girls to express themselves effectively, the schools must do something besides sham work. Formal exercises in language must be subordinated to the expression of living thought and feeling springing out of real experiences with life and prompted by a service motive.¹¹

In the same book the author states that the best work in speech and in writing comes "only through well-directed practice in genuine self-expression . . . not a parrot-like repetition."¹² He is sure that, in the past, compositions have been "too largely imitative and reproductive. . . too much on books . . . too little on life."¹³

Another writer emphasizes the same principle:

The new curriculum must find the way to make composition become the free and natural expression of independent ideas, or, to use the current term, composition must become communication. It is possible for a pupil to go through high school and receive good grades in English without learning the difference between writing and communicating. Such pupils write neat and often mechanically perfect papers with one, two, and three paragraphs in proper sequence. But the subject and its treatment are second-hand. The pupil has absorbed from reading or from listening certain facts or ideas which he

¹¹Howard R. Driggs, Our Living Language, p. 155.

¹²Ibid., p. 65.

¹³Ibid.

repeats more or less in his own words. . . . The subject has no real significance to him, nor has it raised any internal response. His produce contains nothing which he himself has said. In the process of writing he has been not much more than a kind of automatic relay between the source and the product.¹⁴

If a pupil's best work is creative, there exists a great need for proper stimulation and motivation. In an effort to improve the quality of written English, more careful planning and preparation must be undertaken before a learning activity is presented to the pupils. Murnberg gave voice to this belief when he wrote:

We have to change writing from a dismal art to an enjoyable experience. . . . Don't have pupils write on your topics; let them write on their own. They want to talk about the world they live in because they feel strongly about some of its inadequacies. They enjoy writing on a topic that gets them talking about themselves . . . but, as in all written work, even these topics must be properly prepared for and motivated. . . . Too often we assume that young minds are teeming with ideas that they are eager to write. We do not even bother to say; "Get on your mark!" . . . we expect the young ideas to shoot. For young ideas to shoot, ground has to be plowed up. Seeds have to be planted. The sun must shine.¹⁵

It was suggested in Chapter III that improper attitudes on the part of the students might have some relation to poor work in English. Driggs suggests one way to improve these attitudes:

¹⁴Dooley, op. cit., pp. 80-81.

¹⁵Maxwell Murnberg, "Improving High-School Compositions," English Journal, XXXVI (1947), 243.

A decent respect for the right of youth to discuss his own life problems would greatly help to put real life into composition work. More confidence on the part of teachers in the worth of the opinions of their pupils would call forth the best from these young lives. A freer in-pouring of the real thoughts and experiences of the learner into the class work would enrich and democratize the recitation, and give to the language lesson the zeal that brings right results.¹⁶

This need to stimulate interest and to motivate, that the pupil may do effective work, offers one of the greatest challenges to the present-day teacher. In current literature, many suggestions have been made and recommended, although the fact is recognized that not all groups react favorably to the same stimulation. One article tells of a teacher's endeavor to motivate by explaining the purpose of the work assigned:

Point one in Miss Senoj's program was increased and personalized motivation. Previously, she had given students assignments and simply expected them to do the work because she told them to. Whenever they had asked her, "Why do we hafta do this?" she had answered with the time-worn assurances that "You'll need it later on," or "Everyone who is cultured knows this." . . . Now, however, when she made assignments, or helped students make the class assignments, she assisted them to see why the work was worth while, what sort of dividends it would pay to people in different walks of life. . . . Sometimes they decided that it would help them in their other studies, sometimes that it was something they would really need as adults, and sometimes that it was worth doing simply because it was fun.¹⁷

Driggs relates the story of an activity which was motivated by the teacher's reading to the class from John

¹Driggs, op. cit., p. 70.

²Hook, op. cit., p. 11.

Burrough's "Bird Enemies." One pupil explained that he knew that hawks were enemies of birds, for he had seen one catching birds. A second boy told of having found a snake in a bird's nest, and others told of similar experiences. When interest was at its height, the teacher suggested that they make a bird-enemy book for the library. Thus, an interesting unit was launched.¹⁸

Another teacher, feeling the need for motivation in English work, suggested a literary magazine to be produced by her classes. She tells of its success in a recent article in the English Journal:

It was because of this need of incentive that I initiated a literary magazine in our school, and for the last four years I have carefully nursed its growing pains. . . as I realized the important part its increasing popularity was playing in stimulating composition work among our students.¹⁹

In a footnote to the same article the teacher explains that the recent publication contains eleven introductory pages, ninety-five stories and essays, fifteen pages of "Special Days" stories and poems, twenty-three pages of poetry, and twenty pages of special features, such as fashions, beauty hints, foods, sports, jokes, and school advertisements.²⁰

¹⁸Driggs, op. cit., p. 65.

¹⁹Florence E. Way, "The Magazine: An Incentive to Composition," English Journal, XXXIX (1950), 87.

²⁰Ibid.

Although the teacher often offers the motivation for work, on occasions it comes from outside the classroom. Such was the situation in Seattle.

For several years Seattle high school students have been interested in the natural history contests sponsored by a chain of newspapers. A letter from a contest judge of previous years indicated that many of the contestants were fairly cognizant of the facts of history but were unable to discuss the problems in an organized, readable form. The result of this information was that a group of student leaders became most concerned about writing techniques. Both through regular classes and through after-school sessions this group studied beginnings, statements of point of view, development of a thesis, paragraphing, transitions, illustrative examples, and endings.²¹

In this instance their realization of a purpose was the motivating power.

Among other forms of motivation are tests imposed by the administrators. For example, in one school a hurdle examination was given:

It was announced in September that all tenth-grade students would be required to take a hurdle examination in English mechanics at the end of the year. The examination would cover spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Students failing to make a passing grade on the hurdle would be required to take a special course in English mechanics during the following year. . . . Instruction in mechanics and improvement in the mechanical aspects of English followed. . . . It should not be supposed that the value of the mechanics hurdle lies in these remedial classes. On the contrary, the value lies in what the hurdle means to all the students in the tenth-grade who, in order to avoid giving up three periods a week in their junior year to mechanics, really settle down and master the basic mechanical skills.²²

²¹Helen Olson, "Teaching Basic Language Skills," English Journal, XXXIX (1950), 250.

²²John E. Warriner, "Hurdling English Mechanics," English Journal, XXXV (1946), 448-49.

The preceding examples of means of motivation are but a few of the possibilities. Every single influence that stimulates in the pupil a desire to learn to express himself well would be one more example, and every possible means of motivating should be explored, if necessary, to stimulate interest in even the most indifferent students.

The foregoing have been suggestions of the new trends in the teaching of language, as revealed in the current literature, all of which may be worthy of endorsement and of trial in pursuing language improvement with this particular group--the eighth-grade of Pilot Point Public School, the subject of this study. One writer has summarized the methods in this way:

Inductive teaching of punctuation
 as opposed to
 Memorization of rules or inserting of punctuation.
 Individualized teaching of spelling
 as opposed to
 One method for the entire class.
 Inductive teaching of sentence structure
 as opposed to
 Memorizing rules.
 Individual word lists
 as opposed to
 Set-up vocabulary or spelling lists.
 Correction of own written work
 as opposed to
 Drill exercises.
 Repeated use of the skill in ways meaningful and
 important to the student
 as opposed to
 Isolated drill which has no meaning for the student
 and often not much for the teacher and often goes
 into the wastepaper basket.
 Building habits of investigation
 as opposed to
 Guessing.

Student proofreading
as opposed to
Teacher correction and wastebasket.²³

It seems that the general methods of procedure outlined above could possibly offer much toward vitalizing instruction. But, there are other things of major importance in developing proper habits and attitudes in the classroom. Life within the schoolroom should be a happy, joyous, cooperative experience. Some writers stress the dramatic; for example, one has stated:

Childhood and youth gets its most stimulating effects, not primarily by adding line to line, precept to precept, but quite casually, accidentally, unexpectedly. Education is largely the by-product of dramatic exploits, of moments when something vital is happening, or about to happen.²⁴

The greatest single crime in our scholastic education is the school's denial of the dramatic moments in the experiences of childhood and youth, and its reliance upon the line upon line, precept by precept type of instruction.²⁵

Life without drama is not life, but a slow waiting for death. No school that ignores all the dramatic moments in living will ever for long have the right to call itself education.

.....
What we do need is some sense of joy in life and work; some feel of the dramatic; the plot of circumstance; the gathering of the crisis, the problematical; the climax; the clash of interests and the play of elemental forces. . .²⁶

²³Olson, op. cit., p. 252.

²⁴Joseph K. Hart, Social Interpretation of Education, p. 365.

²⁵Ibid., p. 369.

²⁶Ibid., p. 380.

Another move which might add to the happiness of some of our pupils, especially those who are having difficulties in pleasing homefolks with grades, or in competing with brothers and sisters, is the elimination of report cards and of grade marks. In this connection, Hart quotes from a publication of a school in Alabama:

. . . The moral development of the child requires a life of sincere, unselfconscious experiences. Working for grades, marks, promotions, etc., tends through false motivation to divide the unity of the being. He should study because he desires to know or needs the information, not merely because it is required.

Fearlessness is a demand of the spirit. Self-consciousness is a kind of fear. The child who is constantly marked and graded and measured develops an inhibiting self-consciousness which may become paralyzing. . . . Or, he may become wholly externalized, depending entirely on outer suggestion, or he may become arrogant and egotistical. . . .

When children are stimulated to study for fear of failure, to please the teacher or parent, to get a grade or to be promoted, a subtle influence is at work producing double motives. This not only interferes with the co-ordination of the nervous system, often resulting in ill health, but also prevents clear thinking, and most of all interferes with that basic sincerity.²⁷

If school is to be a happy place, where the pupils can develop right habits and attitudes, those who are embarrassed because of some physical characteristic must not be forgotten. Lee and Lee comment that "grave injustice, physically and psychologically, may be done where a child is arbitrarily branded 'too thin' or 'too fat'."²⁸

²⁷ Joseph K. Hart, Social Interpretation of Education, pp. 149-150, quoting Mrs. Marietta Johnson's publication from her school at Fairhope, Alabama.

²⁸ J. M. Lee and D. M. Lee, The Child and His Curriculum, p. 25.

They continue by saying:

Height, weight, and general physical proportions have more to do with personality and development than is usually recognized. The small child is often "left out of things." . . . He either retires into himself and becomes introverted or he fights for his place and develops defense reactions which make him appear pugnacious, egotistical or "cocky." Or, he may compensate by becoming extremely studious.²⁹

Every effort should be made to locate the children who are discriminated against by the others, in any way; each case should be studied carefully, and action should be taken to improve and to correct the situation of each unhappy member.

For those who have little self-confidence and little sense of personal worth, efforts should be made to interest them in work in which they can excel, trying in this way to develop their ability to take the initiative at times.

For those who feel unhappy about their school relationships, efforts should be made to assure them that the teachers are their friends, anxious to help them in any way, if they will but cooperate.

For those who are unhappy about home relationships, the teacher should study their cases carefully and, if she deem such a plan feasible, she should contact the homes in an effort to help make possible adjustments.

²⁹Ibid.

This chapter has attempted to outline possible improved methods of procedure in the learning of written language, methods which will make the curriculum more flexible, more child-centered, more challenging, more interesting, allowing for less formal grammar, more functional grammar, more creative work, and providing for individual differences.

In addition, the necessity of handling the case of each unhappy and of each maladjusted pupil as a separate problem has been pointed out and recommendations have been made that action be taken after careful thought and planning.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

In the previous chapters, an attempt has been made to point out the nature of the errors in written English of the eighth-grade students of the Pilot Point School, such errors having been determined by the California Language Test. In addition, a study of the mental, environmental, and personality factors relating to this group of students has been made, with attempts to show possible relationships among these factors and the errors revealed by the language test. Chapter IV suggested possible improved procedures for future use with this group.

Following this study no arbitrary statements can be made concerning the relationships among the several factors studied and the English errors under consideration, but certain possibilities can be pointed out. It seems that a close relationship does exist between abilities in English and mental factors and between English abilities and personality factors, though the relationship between the first two seems greater than that between the latter. The 25 per cent of the students ranking highest in English are also high in mentality and in personality, according to the results of the tests administered.

Another conclusion is that this particular group of students seems to be different from the average group in that all except two are in the high-average and the low-average divisions as to intelligence.

It seems that there is little variance in the standards of living conditions of the twenty-two students of this eighth-grade. Each is from a home of moderate means, where those conveniences common to middle-class homes are found.

According to the results obtained from the California Test of Personality, this group of students is below average in personality, lacking in both self-adjustment and in social-adjustment. From the data from this same test, it seems plausible to conclude that students low in self-adjustment are quite low in ability in written language.

Physical examinations are needed by some of the pupils to determine defects, if any, and to reassure those who believe they are ill.

The tests used confirm the popular belief that each pupil is different from every other one, necessitating a very flexible program of work.

Recommendations

As a result of the preceding study, it seems that the following recommendations are warranted:

1. The schoolroom should be a place conducive to work, one in which a happy, joyous atmosphere prevails, one in which the teacher is known to be a friend and counselor, and one in which each pupil is socially accepted, insofar as is possible.

2. Improvement in written composition should be placed on a highly individualized basis, in order to take care of differences in abilities and in interests. This would call for a very flexible program of work, so flexible that each pupil could find satisfaction in work well-done.

3. The teacher should strive to see that the schoolroom affords many social situations that require the use of proper English, oral as well as written.

4. The use of written English should be made as functional as possible. Formal grammar should be replaced and drill should be used only as the student recognizes its purpose.

5. A positive approach, rather than a negative approach, should be used in the presentation of language materials, and an inductive method of instruction rather than a deductive.

6. Most of the written work in English should be creative, and should be assigned after the pupil's interest has been aroused and he has been motivated to write.

7. The most should be made of dramatic experiences. The pupils should learn that their experiences are of interest to others and offer them subjects for creative writing.

8. Students should be trained to evaluate their own work.

9. Small, homogeneous groups should work together, grade-lines should be erased, and grade-markings should be eliminated so fast as the school is able to make needed adjustments. In the meantime, pupils should be encouraged to do work within their abilities and should be led to see that grades are not worthy motives for work.

10. Health examinations should be made available to the students, at least to those who are ill, or to those who think they are ill.

11. Efforts should be made to stimulate self-respect and self-confidence in every pupil, no matter how timid he may be.

12. Each child who faces difficulties, as shown by his poor work, his poor behavior, or his unhappiness, should receive kind, sympathetic help in an effort to help him become a cooperative, competent student.

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