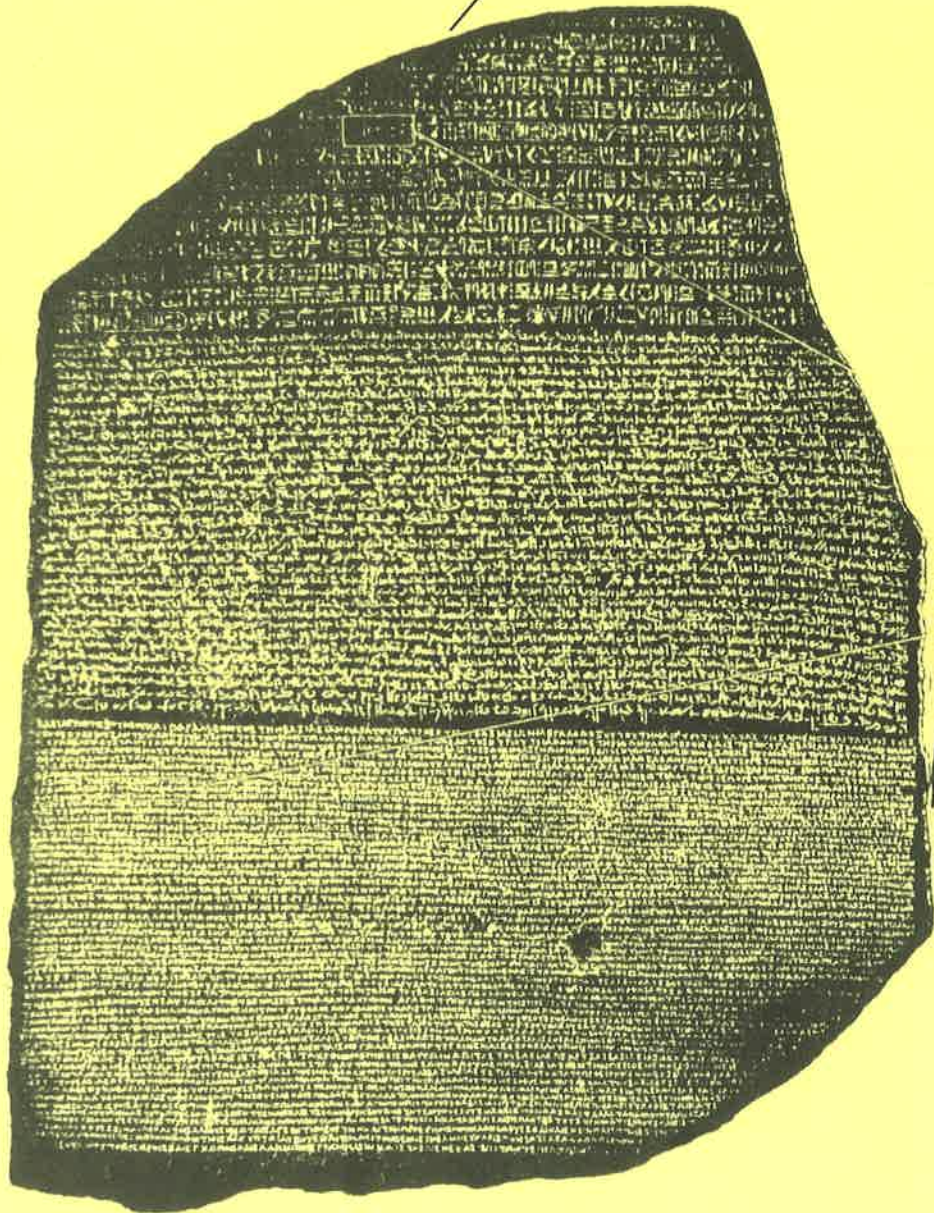


# THRESHOLDS

IN EDUCATION

## COMMUNICATIONS — THE KEY



# EL BODY LANGUAGO

AS A FULL FLEDGED OR SEMI FLEDGED TEACHER ONE MUST REALIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF BODY LANGUAGE TO HELP CONVEY IDEAS. HERE ARE A FEW CLASSIC EXAMPLES OF SOME ANATOMY LINGO.

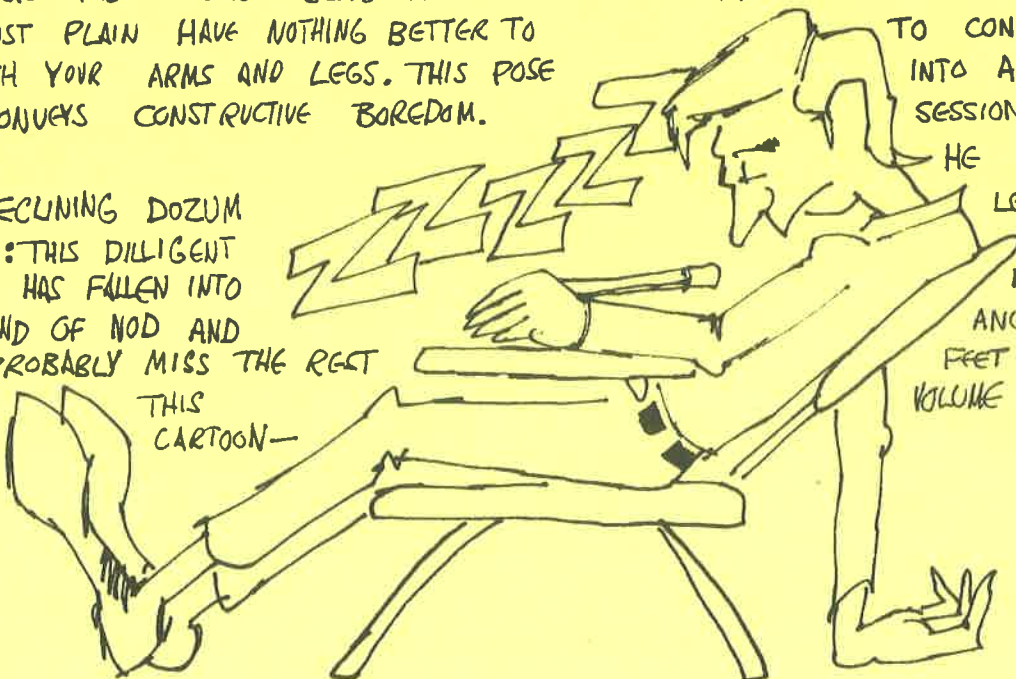


THE CROSSED APPENDAGES POSITION: THIS IS A GOOD POSE FOR THE SOCIALLY ELITE OR IF YOU JUST PLAIN HAVE NOTHING BETTER TO DO WITH YOUR ARMS AND LEGS. THIS POSE BEST CONVEYS CONSTRUCTIVE BOREDOM.



THE MULTI-DIRECTIONAL SPASMODIC POSE: NO, THIS GUY DIDN'T HAVE 27 CUPS OF COFFEE THIS MORNING. HE IS JUST TRYING TO CONDENSE 3 VOLUMES INTO A ONE HOUR SESSION. IT'S EASY!

THE RECLINING DOZUM POSITION: THIS DILLIGENT STUDENT HAS FALLEN INTO THE LAND OF NOD AND WILL PROBABLY MISS THE REST OF



HE DOES THIS BY LETTING HIS VOICE COVER ONE VOLUME, HIS HANDS COVER ANOTHER, AND HIS FEET COVER YET ANOTHER VOLUME ALL SIMULTANEOUSLY.

THIS CARTOON—

*Thomas Kelly III*  
'78

dividual feelings of self-worth and expression in the learning process. New educational techniques derived from the communications industry have helped us create a classroom environment that has explored and strengthened emotional development. Hopefully, a new generation of more confident and secure students will see that written and spoken language, too, can be valuable tools both for critical examination of ideas, and for learning more about themselves.

John Reque's article would seem to have all kinds of possibilities here, as students and teachers together turn their attention to a study of the writing conventions that seem useful and appropriate for **their** school. We hope his article encourages other schools to think about developing an individual style manual of their own. And, of course, we hope most of all that this spectrum of articles in **Thresholds** will stimulate all of you to think about "communications" in your own school.

### The Editors

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American teenagers aren't handling the written word as well today as they were several years ago. According to surveys of writing skills taken first in 1970 and repeated in 1974, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) found that 13- and 17-year-olds seem to be shifting from traditional-writing conventions to a shorter writing style employed in television, newspapers, and advertising. Compared with 1970 writing, the 1974 samples showed sentence fragments, simpler sentence construction, more run-on sentences, and decreased coherence.

Roy H. Forbes is a Project Director for the National Assessment of Educational Progress, Denver, Colorado.

Statistics, surveys, and experimental attainments of different age groups in ten learning areas. The nationwide survey of writing skills showed that American youths generally lack three essential writing skills: organizing their writing, making clear transitions between sentences and improving their work through revision (students are willing to revise their written work, but the revisions usually are either stylistic or "cosmetic changes" that seldom improve the overall writing effort, or mechanical—punctuation and spelling.)

The writing assessment, which involved 80,000 students, included essay questions in three age levels, 9-, 13-, and 17-year-olds. The writing of 13- and 17-year olds

### Analyzation of the Essays

The essays were scored in two ways: holistically and descriptively. The holistic method emphasized the reader's response to the whole essay rather than to such aspects as style, content, and mechanics. In the descriptive method, teachers with experience in grammar and linguistics read the essays against rigid guidelines on paragraphing, sentence structure, punctuation, spelling, word choice, and capitalization.

Essays by students in the 1974 NAEP assessments showed that basic writing mechanics (capitalization, punctuation, spelling, agreement, and word usage) taught in elementary and junior high schools are being handled

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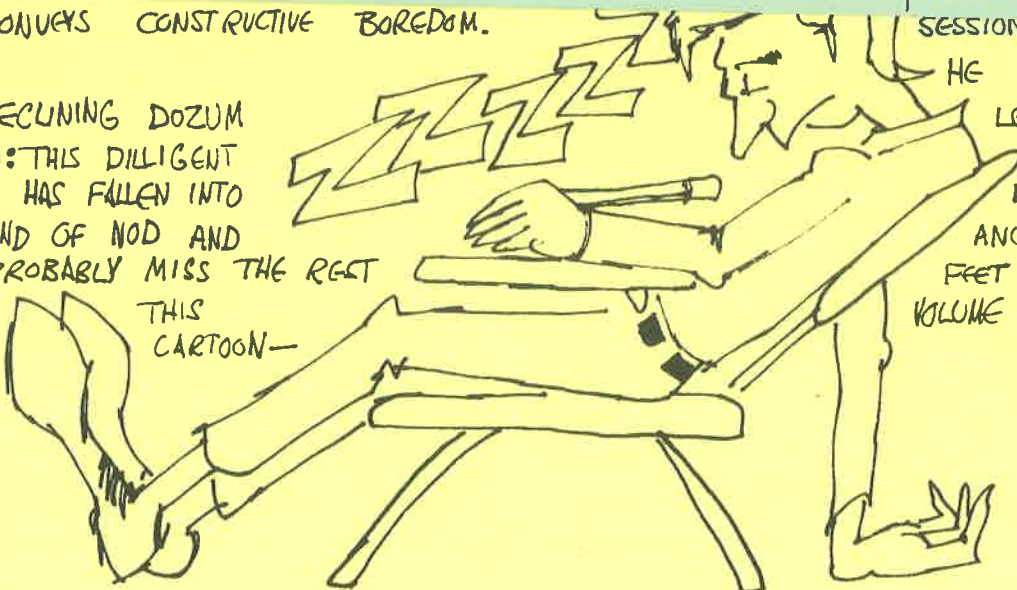
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The Editors

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## Writing Assessments

By Roy H. Forbes

Despite a good grasp on spelling, punctuation and grammar, American teenagers aren't handling the written word as well today as they were several years ago. According to surveys of writing skills taken first in 1970 and repeated in 1974, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) found that 13- and 17-year-olds seem to be shifting from traditional-writing conventions to a shorter writing style employed in television, newspapers, and advertising. Compared with 1970 writing, the 1974 samples showed sentence fragments, simpler sentence construction, more run-on sentences, and decreased coherence.

### Three Writing Skills Lacking

National Assessment, an information-gathering project of the National Center for Education Statistics, surveys the educational attainments of different age groups in ten learning areas. The nationwide survey of writing skills showed that American youths generally lack three essential writing skills: organizing their writing, making clear transitions between sentences and improving their work through revision (students are willing to revise their written work, but the revisions usually are either stylistic or "cosmetic changes" that seldom improve the overall writing effort, or mechanical—punctuation and spelling.)

The writing assessment, which involved 80,000 students, included essay questions in three age levels, 9-, 13-, and 17-year-olds. The writing of 13- and 17-year olds

declined in quality between the two assessments. The 9-year-olds papers showed an improvement, with the proportion of good writers rising in 1974.

### Analyzation of the Essays

The essays were scored in two ways: holistically and descriptively. The holistic method emphasized the reader's response to the whole essay rather than to such aspects as style, content, and mechanics. In the descriptive method, teachers with experience in grammar and linguistics read the essays against rigid guidelines on paragraphing, sentence structure, punctuation, spelling, word choice, and capitalization.

Essays by students in the 1974 NAEP assessments showed that basic writing mechanics (capitalization, punctuation, spelling, agreement, and word usage) taught in elementary and junior high schools are being handled

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Roy H. Forbes is a Project Director for the National Assessment of Educational Progress, Denver, Colorado.

well enough by the majority of students. The declines came in coherence and in a trend toward more sentence fragments. Both point toward a movement away from the conventions of established writing.

The 13-year-olds and the 17-year-olds were given the same writing task:

*Everybody knows of something that is worth talking about. Maybe you know about a famous building like the Empire State Building in New York City or something like the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. Or you might know a lot about the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City or the new sports stadium in Atlanta or St. Louis. Or you might be familiar with something from nature, like Niagara Falls, a gigantic wheat field, a grove of orange trees, or a part of a wide, muddy river like the Mississippi.*

*There is probably something you can describe. Choose something you know about. It may be something from around where you live, or something you have seen while traveling, or something you have studied in school. Think about it for awhile and then write a description of what it looks like so that it could be recognized by someone who reads your description.*

In the 17-year-old group, there was an overall decline in quality. The mean holistic score dropped from 5.12 to 4.85 (on a scale of 1 to 8), and the percentage of students writing papers ranked 4 or better declined from 85 percent to 78 percent.

The good writers in this group were as good as those in 1969, and there were more of them. They wrote longer essays without losing coherence. The poor writers were worse, and there were more of them than in 1969. Their essays were shorter and less stylistically

sophisticated. They made more errors, and their essays were not as coherent as those of the 1969 group.

#### Profiling the Essays

A profile of the essay written by an average 17-year-old shows it is 137 words long, is composed of about nine sentences averaging 16 words, and is organized into two paragraphs that are coherent, but not well-developed. Half of the sentences are simple sentences, about three-fourths of which include phrases; a third are complex, and most of them contain phrases. Only six percent of the sentences are compound. Of the nine sentences in the average essay, four or five are simple, three are complex, and the remainder fall under compound sentence, fragment, or run-on. Only one paragraph in every ten is fully developed. Three percent of the words used by the 17-year-olds were misspelled. Little use was made of dashes, quotation marks, question marks, exclamation points, colons, semicolons, or parentheses.

In 1969, 13 percent of the 17-year-olds wrote papers that were shorter than four sentences. In 1974, 20 percent of the papers were in that category.

In determining that the gap between the good and the poor writer is widening, the evaluators found that a good paper was almost twice as long as a poor one, both in numbers of words and number of sentences. The difference in average word length showed a richer vocabulary in the good papers. The better papers were more sophisticated in composition, employing more punctuation, more complex sentences, and sentences with phrases.

An example of one of the better essays written by a 17-year-old (it was given a rating of 7 out of a possible 8) is the following:

*Shaped like a large needle, it looms over the city. It stands ready for the people. The many buildings around it are as famous as it is. The obelisk (sic) is narrow, yet tall. There are many flights of stairs in it. Several elevators stand ready to whisk you to the top. White, gleaming at night from a distance it seems to point straight to heaven. The floodlights at the base sweep the sky with ribbons of white. The river flows smoothly by. And days, with their tourists, are talkative, lively, so glad to be alive, boaters on the lake, trees and birds singing all combine to make it more beautiful. Behind it, at a distance is a reflecting pool. The tall spear is mirrored in the water. The blue sky, fluffy clouds dot the image. The water lillies help to make it all a delightful experience for all the senses. It has been called one of the wonders of the modern world. And it truly is. This great, gleaming tribute, this monument, to our first president, George Washington.*

Among the 13-year-olds, the average essay in the second assessment was of lower quality than that in the 1969 assessment, the mean holistic score dropping from 5.0 to 4.7. The average essay was 17 words, or one sentence, shorter; its vocabulary was simpler; it consisted of seven percent fewer complex sentences, five percent run-on sentences, and two percent more fragments; it was less sophisticated (fewer sentences with phrases) and contained ten percent more awkward sentences.

Coherence remained unchanged between surveys, and results in spelling changed only slightly, a few more misspellings that reflected an attempt to sound out a word phonetically. The average paper was shorter and more awkwardly written than the average paper in the first survey.

An example of a medium quality paper by a 13-year-old (it was given a rating of 5) is the following one-paragraph essay:

*Detroit stadium is very big. It has many seats to sit in. It has green grass on the bottom. After someone plays on it, they cover it up with plastic. Then when they go to play another game, they take it off again. When it is baseball season the tigers play on it. When it is football season the lions play on it. When you get to the stadium, to get to your set, you have to climb up many, many steps. When you get to your section, an usher will show you to your seat. They have many things you can buy. Like peanuts, pencils, year books, and little bats.*

Three out every five essays by 13-year-olds contained no compound sentences. In 1969, 16 percent of the essays in this age group contained no complex sentences; in the latest assessment the proportion rose to 24 percent. In 1969, 19 percent of the papers did not have a coherent paragraph; now the figure is 28 percent.

### Some Writing Improvements

The news is not uniformly discouraging, however. The better papers in the 13-year-old group were for the most part more sophisticated in the second assessment: They contained almost three times the proportion of complex sentences, twice the proportion of sentences with phrases, and almost twice the percentage of coherent paragraphs. They also showed greater mastery of conventions, having one-fourth as many run-ons, one-third the misspellings, and less than half as many awkward sentences.

The bad news was in the low-scoring papers, which generally rambled and lacked focus.



In both assessments, females wrote better essays than males.

**The 17-year-olds:** The holistic scores of both sexes dropped, but the females continued to write longer essays on the average than the males, had fewer run-ons and awkward sentences, spelled better, and used more sentences with phrases.

**The 13-year-olds:** Here again the holistic score for both sexes dropped in four years, but the drop was greater for the males. Both sexes wrote shorter essays, but again males showed a greater difference.

Both wrote fewer complex sentences.

### What Does It All Mean?

To facilitate interpretation of the assessment findings and encourage discussion of their implications, NAEP asked nationally recognized experts what might be happening to writing skills.

"Every time we attack the schools or teachers for the drop in writing skills, we should also point a finger at our culture," said Elizabeth Wooten Cowan, director of English Programs at the Modern Language Association of America, New York City.

"Language is culturally specific," Cowan said. "I think we are asking a very difficult task of the schools to outweigh the influence of the culture, and I suspect that this influence is stronger on students than on teachers. Consider some of the TV language that is part of the daily listening diet for students, the lack of writing in the home environment, the kinds of magazines that appeal to youths...then you have to ask what kind of an impossible job are you asking of the schools? The NAEP report illustrates a kind of 'future shock' in student writing, probably reflecting perceptions of visual techniques and exposure to writing principles that textbooks do not discuss and which traditionally trained teachers may neither recognize nor respect."

Two other writing experts, Richard Lloyd-Jones of the University of Iowa, chairman of the Conference on College Composition and Communications, and Ross Winterowd of the University of California at Los Angeles, chairman of the National Council of Teachers of English Committee on Composition, had several other observations:

- There is no evidence that the schools must go back to the basics, which seem to be well in hand.

- The drop in holistic scores may well reveal as much about the

scorers as the scored. Language is always changing and the scorers may prefer standards of written expression that are becoming outmoded. The new standards—if such they are—are different, but may not necessarily be lower or in any sense indefensible.

- Society provides less and less motivation for writing. As the need to write is diminished by the omnipresence of telephones, the use of tape recorders, and a growing cultural preference for visual communication, writing may move towards simpler forms.

- Since writing is inextricably tied to reading and vice versa, good readers are often good writers. It follows that since the 17-year-olds and 13-year-olds in the 1974 survey did less reading than their counterparts of 1969, their ability to write could be expected to be poorer.

- Standard English is used as the writing model in most American school systems. Since it is a dialect and the one to be mastered if a person wants to succeed in society, lower scores may signal a decline in social aspiration.

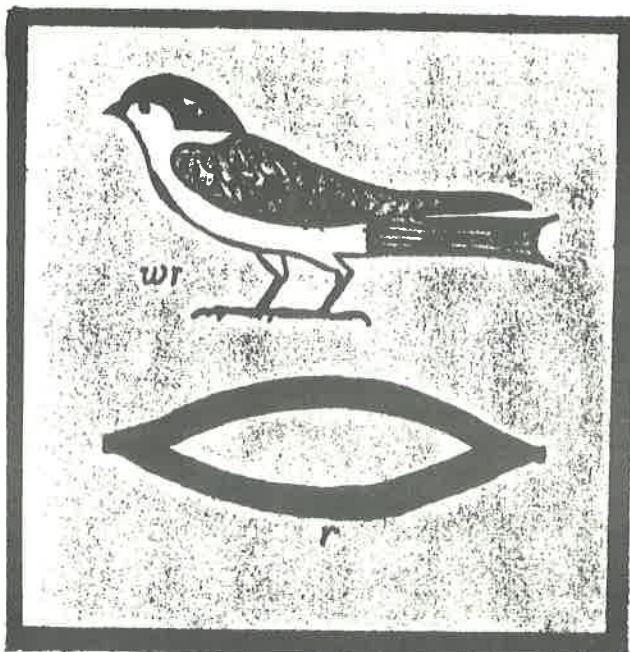
- As classroom size grows, it becomes increasingly difficult for teachers to read essays. Result: They tend to assign fewer of them. The less writing students are required to do, the poorer they will be at written expressions.

- Since the 1960s the schools have encouraged free narrative personal writing rather than utilitarian writing.

In general, Lloyd—Jones and Winterowd expressed belief that the good writers among the 17-year-olds are probably the college bound who realize they will need to be highly literate to succeed. The average student, on the other hand, seeing little advantage to writing, lacks motivation.

It was pointed out that the 13-year-olds, not yet feeling the pressures exerted upon the 17-year-olds, who are moving into adulthood, show no real evidence of good and bad writing polarization. The decline in quality at the 13-year-level may be simply another reflection of a society-wide change in attitude toward writing.

Human beings have spent thousands of years developing the art of writing. What happens when a culture experiences rapid changes in its language, or when new technologies have impact upon the written, as well as the spoken word? Are old standards of writing to remain valid, or should rules change quickly to meet the needs of the immediate generation? These are but a few of the questions raised by the results of the two national assessments of writing skills.



**WR + R = GREAT**



# Communication Skills: A Teacher-Designed Curriculum Component

By John Reque

High school teachers often complain that curriculum is handed down from the top—that principals, curriculum specialists, even school board members impose it not so much by telling them what to teach as by choosing textbooks and other commercial materials that control what is taught because of content. The alternative is to create one's own curriculum by developing materials unique to a specific school. At Evanston (Ill.) Township High School an example of this process has been evolving in the English department for the past twenty years. Originating as the **ETHS Manual of Form and Style**, a guidebook of manuscript and other form requirements for the writing produced by students in all classes, not just English, it has been expanded within the past two years to include a handbook of grammar and mechanics rules that all teachers are expected to use in effecting good writing skills. This handbook grew out of the English department's "minimum performance criteria," a list of skills to be taught at specific grade and ability levels. It prepares pupils for the proficiency exams in English that have been given annually at ETHS for three years.

These exams, the handbook, and the **Manual of Form and Style** itself were written by ETHS English

teachers, who thus have created not only their own curricular guidelines in the area of writing skills but also materials for teaching that curriculum and the means of testing its accomplishments. Teachers at ETHS consequently have developed a curriculum component that fits their own requirements rather than buying one to which they had to adapt. The process is hard work. But the benefits outweigh the frustrations, for they produce a curricular structure that motivates teachers because they have a personal stake in it. Any teacher knows the pleasure that grows from a unit he created himself. The same satisfaction collectively comes from a school-wide effort built from student needs. The interlocking parts of such a project function as a smoothly running machine.

The father of the **ETHS Manual of Form and Style** is Clarence Hach, currently president of the Illinois Assn. of Teachers of English and an ETHS teacher for thirty years. When he became English department chairman in 1954, Hach began to realize the irritations students encountered as they tried to follow the directions of different teachers. "The English teacher wanted the heading in the upper left corner; the social studies teacher liked it in the upper right," he recalled. "The sophomore teacher used one set of marking symbols; the junior teacher preferred another." Hach's

journalism background gave him the idea for a style manual that would set up uniform guidelines for student papers. "A publication always uses a style manual for consistency," he noted. "There's no reason why a school shouldn't, too."

Hach wrote most of the first **ETHS Manual of Form and Style** himself, but he consulted with English teachers and a few from other departments about the materials to be included. "We didn't follow the rules of any particular stylebook but modified ideas from several of them," he said. "We tried to simplify forms whenever possible for the high school student level."

The first manual of 64 pages cost about \$1 per copy to have printed and sold for that price at the school store. It included rules on manuscript form, outlining, taking notes for research papers, footnoting and bibliography rules, an annotated list of ETHS library reference books in English, social studies, and the sciences, lists of commonly misspelled words, a set of paper-grading symbols and instructions for completing a correction sheet for composition errors, and several model pages of student compositions—both handwritten and typed—to show form results.

By the time a second edition of the manual was required three years later, some changes had become desirable. "We tried to involve other departments more," ex-

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John Reque teaches journalism and English at Evanston Township High School, Evanston, Illinois.

plained Hach. "We had used a sample research paper from an English class the first time; in the second edition we chose pages from social studies papers and charts from science reports to illustrate their forms as well."

But Hach didn't feel the entire faculty really used the manual. "We could make sure English teachers followed it, but it was up to other department chairmen to encourage their teachers to use it, and not all of them did," he said. "New teachers were always given copies, and that at least got them acquainted with it."

As time went by the manual was revised every three years, mostly by additions. The school policy on plagiarism was printed at its beginning. When the English department adopted a "no-excuse" spelling list (in which grades were reduced on papers with certain misspelled words), that list was published in the manual. Although the no-excuse policy was later modified, the list remained. Major additions were made in the fifth edition guidelines for writing the research paper by English teachers Carol Lounsbury and Marilyn Morgan, who saw that earlier manuals were incomplete in discussing those skills. The school board approved the manual as a required purchase, which made it easier to be sure that every student had one. "We had dozens of requests from other schools for the manual as its reputation grew," recalled Hach. "Two or three even republished it under their own cover."

When Clarence Hach retired in 1975 as supervisor of English, the manual was in its sixth edition, 80 pages, having survived enrollment growth and decline and several reorganizations of ETHS. He had directed the implementation of behavioral objectives as an English curriculum base, and a condensation of those objectives had produced "minimum performance criteria" (MPC's): a sequential list of communication skills to be mastered at each grade level in the English program. Completion of this list coincided with the frustrating search by a committee of English teachers for a handbook of grammar and mechanics skills

that could serve as a guide for mastery of the MPC's. The English departments (ETHS at that time was divided into four "schools"; now it has two, East and West, within one building) had also decided to write proficiency exams at each level to test mastery of the MPC's.

The failure to find an adequate handbook proved fortunate. Most handbooks were too expensive, even when pro-rated over four years' use. Many were too difficult. Some were badly designed for readability. One seemed just right, but a close reading by English teachers David Foote and Debbie Horwitz revealed sexist language, contrary to the ETHS policy on sexism. So the English departments decided to write their own, add it to the **Manual of Form and Style**, and publish it as an enlarged seventh edition of 96 pages.

Producing the handbook as part of a revised manual took one year. Deciding that the handbook should be a version simple enough for lower-average freshmen and sophomores, English chairmen Malcolm Stern and Robert Workman applied for a \$1,000 summer curriculum project for writing the manual. Two teachers with strong experience at that level, Ronald Gearing and Joanne Ichkoff, received \$400 each to write the 21-page language handbook; Stern and Workman were paid \$100 each for editing duties.

By the fall of 1976 a first draft of the handbook had been distributed to English teachers for suggestions. There were several, including minor changes in the clarification of rules. One department meeting was used to discuss revisions of the manual. The correction sheet symbols that Stern and Workman wanted to drop were retained because so many teachers found them useful. Librarian Alice Johnson updated the reference book list. English teacher Marcia Harding designed a model bibliography card for a casebook source, an oversight in earlier manuals.

Between September 1976 and May 1977 the manual/handbook made a series of round trips to the printer for corrections and revisions. The same printer had pro-

duced the manual for twenty years, and his personal interest in its details contributed a great deal to its accuracy and attractiveness.

Published as the 1977-78 school year opened, the manual/handbook was sold to all entering freshmen at \$2.50. In addition, all other students in regular English classes were asked to buy only the handbook pages at a cost of \$1. The complete manual cost \$1.98 per copy to produce; the separate handbook pages cost 79 cents. This edition has been copyrighted by ETHS.

The language handbook is divided into four sections: capitalization, punctuation, parts of speech, and syntax. Rules are discussed in traditional terms. "Teachers preferred this approach to any effort at using a transformational grammar or structural linguistics approach," said Stern. Nineteen rules of capitalization are presented. The punctuation unit includes rules on the period, question mark, exclamation point, comma, apostrophe, quotation marks, semi-colon, colon, hyphen, and italics. It does not deal with the dash, ellipses, parentheses, or brackets. "We wanted to focus on only those rules that freshmen and sophomores in regular English are supposed to master according to the MPC's," Mrs. Ichkoff pointed out. "We omitted items if they were to be learned only at a later year or higher level."

The third section of the handbook defines the eight standard parts of speech and offers examples of the varieties of each. Under pronouns, for example, it discusses personal, compound (both intensive and reflexive), interrogative, relative, demonstrative, and indefinite pronouns, as well as number, person, gender, and case. The syntax section examines the parts of the sentence: subject, predicate, complement, direct and indirect objects, and clauses. It also looks at major sentence errors—fragments, run-ons, and comma splices—and agreement problems between subject and verb and between pronoun and antecedent.

The capitalization, punctuation, and agreement rules are numbered to allow teachers a code for quick

marking of errors that forces the pupil to look up the rule in the handbook before he can correct it. An idea borrowed from some commercial handbooks, it anticipates that the pupil may learn the rule by having to look it up and might thus not repeat the error.

Writing the handbook required a careful focus on the audience for whom it was intended. The authors avoided sexist language with examples such as, "Pam excelled in jumping the hurdles this year, and she'll try even harder next year." Keeping the style as clear as possible and putting a bit of fun into the examples also helped the results. "Occasionally we ran into disagreements among the experts on a rule," noted Mrs. Ichkoff. "So we would make a somewhat arbitrary decision rather than confuse students." For example, the comma rules include a required comma before the coordinating conjunction because that rule has always been taught at ETHS.

ETHS spent \$600 last fall to supply every teacher in the building with a copy of the new **Manual of Form and Style Handbook**, introduced it at a faculty meeting at

which English teachers explained how to use it to small groups of colleagues, and specified seven items from the handbook that non-English teachers should focus on in encouraging students to sharpen their writing skills. "We hope other departments will invite English teachers to conduct further sessions on using the manual," Mrs. White added. "We're optimistic that by providing each teacher with a copy we're demonstrating our seriousness about better writing skills as an all-faculty goal."

The material chosen for the handbook feeds into the proficiency exams that all English students at ETHS must take each April. Diagnostic tests also have been developed to be given in the fall to show teachers what skills need to be emphasized within grammar and mechanics units during the year. Exercises that allow pupils to work on these skills independently have been written for the ETHS skills labs. The proficiency exams affect students' grades, but they have not yet been adopted as requirements for graduation, as New York and California are now doing.

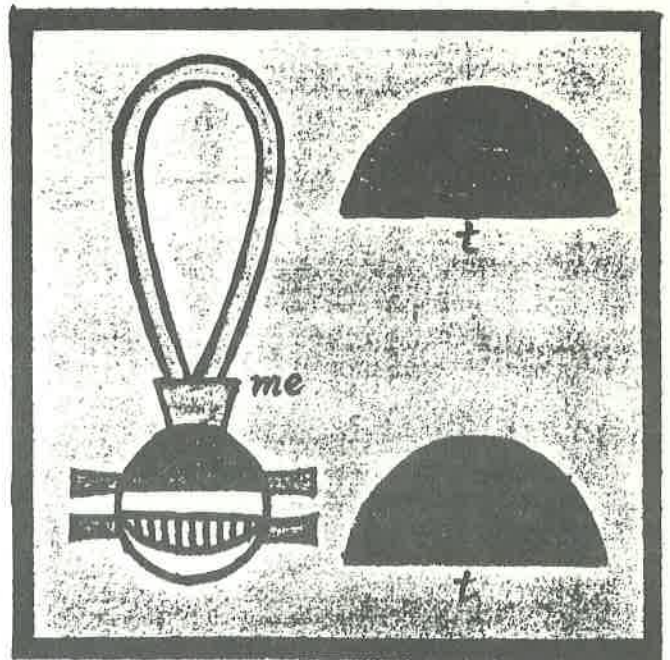
But should Illinois require that, ETHS will be ready.

Meanwhile, the English departments already look ahead to an eighth edition of the manual/handbook in 1980. "It's logical to assume that we may expand the handbook to include "minimum performance criteria" requirements for honors students, who now use a commercial handbook," explained Workman. "That would increase our consistency and cut the cost of books students must buy."

The development of their own system for teaching writing skills has been a methodical and slow process for ETHS English teachers, who still supplement their manual/handbook with some commercial materials. But they feel it has been worth the great deal of time and small amount of money to establish the system. As Clarence Hach recalled about the efforts to begin the manual twenty years ago: "We felt that if we could establish ground rules for these items throughout ETHS, we'd have more time for the real job of education."



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By Elaine A. Giermak

If an English teacher saw the above advertisement in a magazine, he/she would most likely suspect fraud. And yet that ad represents what many college remedial composition courses propose to do.

For the past three years, I taught such courses and directed a writing laboratory at a state university in a special program for students who entered the university with far below average writing skills. These students were placed in special sections of the required freshman English composition course. The sections were smaller than the regular classes, were taught by special teachers, and were supplemented by a laboratory

where students could receive tutoring. Students were pushed to complete the course in one semester, but if they did not achieve the necessary writing level by the end of one semester, they could take the course for another semester without the penalty of an F.

Because in the past some of these students had been "passed on" into the second semester of freshman English, unable to write, two years ago the staff worked hard to develop a competency-based program, in which the students' writing level was evaluated every five weeks by a program-wide test that was graded anonymously by members of the staff. Anonymous grading insured that the students were being graded fairly, and that they would indeed be able to write at least at a minimal college level before they went on to the second semester of freshman English.

But even with all of this extra help, the students were still being

expected to accomplish a great feat in one or two semesters, a miracle, in fact.

Who are the students in this program? Approximately 10 percent of the freshman class was in the program, and many regular freshman English teachers estimated that at least 10 percent more belonged in it, if there were only room for them. Three years ago most of the students were minority students, but each year since then an increasing number of white middle-class suburban students from "good schools" has been included. In no way is it now a program for minorities.

### Writing and Thinking Problems

The difficulties in writing varied, but most of the students could not write a clear sentence. Perhaps the most obvious writing difficulties were the mechanical errors. Their papers looked terrible. There were spelling, punctuation, and subject-

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verb agreement errors, sentence fragments and run-on sentences.

But these obvious errors can often be more easily corrected than the more subtle problems in writing and thinking. For most of the students, writing sentences was not just a problem of punctuation, but of a lack of any sense of written sentence structure; they just did not know how to put the pieces of the sentence together.

Their thinking skills also were weak. They generally did well on the literal level—they loved courses in which all they had to do was memorize. But they seemed to have had little practice in thinking on the interpretative and evaluative levels. Most of them lacked even simple critical thinking skills. They could not distinguish fact from opinion, general from specific, a main idea from a supporting one. They could not understand the concept of comparison or contrast, even on the concrete level.

These students were not unintelligent. They showed mental acuity, curiosity, and ability in many other ways. It seemed that they had just never been taught critical thinking skills that are so often listed as part of the fourth and fifth grade curricula. They also did not read very well and had not read very much. Therefore, they had very limited vocabularies with which to work.

But mainly they could not write because they had never been taught. Almost all of them had never had a writing course, and some of those who had the greatest problems had done almost no writing of any sort throughout high school.

With such great disadvantages, these students arrived at the university and faced their first college writing course, with its seemingly impossible expectations. At the same time, they were dealing with being away from home and living in a dormitory for the first time, with all the attendant problems of roommates, noise, dormitory food, taking care of their own health, homesickness, money, social development, and decisions about

the ever-present pressures of drugs, alcohol, and sex. For most, the futures they had planned for themselves were dependent on being successful in college, and this first year was crucial to that success. For many college freshmen, English composition is their most difficult course, but for these students it was more than that. It was the first enormous threat to their dreams of being college graduates.

### **Problems and Self-Concept**

Their reactions to this extreme pressure depended to a large extent on their attitudes about themselves and their writing. Almost every one of these students had an inaccurate picture of his/her writing ability. Although each student was different, generally the students' attitudes fell into one of two "types," the student who thought that he/she wrote very well and that he/she did not even belong in a special course, and the student who was convinced that he/she had never been able to write and never would be able to.

The student who was convinced that he/she had no writing problems, and had always got A's on his papers in high school English classes, often reacted with dismay and disbelief when he/she did not get A's — or often not even C's — on his/her college papers. There were many of these students, and they often wasted the first six weeks of the course, convinced that the teacher was just crazy, before the realization that they did indeed have writing difficulties struck them. One such student was Ronald, whose contrast paragraph sums up the situation of many of these students:

*My high school English class had been entirely different from my college English class. For example, the English class in high school had contained exactly thirty-five students when in my college class there was only 17. Also, the time had been very short in my high school class when it had been*

*relatively long in the college class. The work in which we had to produce in my college English class was very complex, but in my high school English class, I had never gotten a headache, however, in my college English class headaches were present every single day that class had been held. In my high school English class there had never come a day that I had been stuck with homework, yet, in my college English class homework had been assigned every night. I had always received A's on every assignment that was handed in to my English class, and that each paper was marked with "Excellence" at the top. On the other hand, my college English class papers were marked "Please See Me." These are the ways in which my high school English class was different.*

When these students did finally realize that perhaps they did have a writing problem, usually after failing the first five-week test, their reactions were varied. Some were angry, and demanded, "Why didn't they tell me this in high school?" Others got depressed, and gave up. And some, including Ronald, remained unconvinced that they had a problem and believed, despite failures, that they could pull it together at the end. A few decided that they really were going to have to work at their writing, and even if they were discouraged or angry, they did settle down to work on their problems.

Almost universally, the students who felt they had no writing problems had been told in high school that their papers would be graded "for their ideas, not for form," and they often demanded to know why this same kind of grading could not be done in their college English course. They found it very difficult to understand that lack of form could interfere with communication of their ideas, especially since some of them were still being told, unfortunately, in some of their university classes that their papers would be graded "only for their ideas." Many of the students who were overconfident about their

writing had a very good self-concept, and it cannot be denied that a good self-concept can be important to success in college. But where the disparity between their views of their own educational levels and reality was very great, many of these students failed courses, or even failed to make their grades to stay in school, either because they were not convinced in time that they had to work hard to succeed, or because they were not able to deal with the shock of the realization of this disparity, and they became depressed and gave up.

The problems of the overconfident student were rivaled by those of the second "type" of student, who had done very little writing and therefore had almost no confidence at all in his/her ability to write. This student usually either had no idea of what was involved in it or was absolutely sure that he/she could no more learn to write than he/she could learn to be a gold medal winner in the Olympics. These students sometimes could write no more than fifty words on any topic at one time, and what they did write was filled with grammatical errors. They simply lacked experience in writing; writing as a communication medium was only slightly more familiar to them than sign language.

There is very little time in a course that is set up to be a one-semester course to facilitate writing fluency. By the end of the first five weeks, the student is expected to write a paragraph that is basically free of grammatical errors and shows sentence variety; by the end of the tenth week, he/she is expected to write two interrelated paragraphs of particular modes; and by the end of the fifteenth week, he/she is expected to write a five-hundred-word essay based on literature read in class, in a style that is at college level. Because of the goals of the course, those students who enter it with little writing experience are almost immediately pushed beyond their capabilities.

There is no way to make up for that kind of writing deficiency in one semester. Many of these students had had grammar courses, and a number of them were able to pass grammar tests, but they had not been asked to write; and, indeed, some of them thought that writing was the same as being able to identify parts of speech and to recite rules for the use of commas. Some of these students worked very hard from the beginning of the course, because they were aware that they had problems in writing, but even the most serious, highly motivated, hard working students had trouble maintaining their faith that they could pass the course when they kept failing the five-week tests and getting unacceptable grades on their papers. Those students who had got F's on those few papers they were required to write in high school, and were convinced that they could never write a paper that would be returned with fewer than a million red marks, gave up even more quickly.

#### **Miracle Workers**

And what was the role of the instructor in helping these students? As the rest of the very dedicated staff in the program, I spent many hours every day in my office seeing students and trying to help them individually. I tried to encourage them in every way I knew, from putting positive comments on their papers to discussing their personal problems as they brought them to me. But, because I had to function under the system I was in, I also put red marks on their papers, made them rewrite endlessly, and failed them on those five-week tests when they hadn't reached the level prescribed by the system. I pushed them further than they could go, because I didn't have two or three years to gradually develop their writing and thinking skills, and in many cases that is how long it would have taken to do the job right. One does not learn to think critically, read widely, and write fluently in one or two semesters.

The miracle of this program is that so many students did learn to write, at least at a minimal college level, in seventy-five days (one semester), or even in two semesters. I am sure that the skills they gained were rather tenuously held, and indeed, we often noticed a regression by the time they reached the second freshman English course, after only four to six weeks of not writing. But most of those who passed the course did learn to write well enough to survive at the university, and I am convinced that, given enough time and the right kind of program, these students can learn to write, even if they begin at the age of eighteen. It is just that it is so much more painful, frustrating, and agonizing for them than it would be if they had read and written regularly in high school, had been given some sort of instruction in writing, preferably a writing course, and had been challenged to think critically.

Probably the reason that so many miracles did occur is that the teachers in the program, as many teachers I have met from similar programs, were extremely dedicated and put an enormous amount of themselves into the program, and because the laboratory facilities, especially the tutors, gave the students even further help and support. But the future for programs like this is not promising. Many educators say that it is too expensive to be doing this kind of teaching at the university level, and whatever commitment the universities have had to this kind of program seems to be waning.

I have returned to high school teaching, but my students of the past three years still haunt me. And so in any high school course I teach, no matter what its title, I will try to see that my students read and write regularly and that they are helped to develop their critical thinking and writing skills. Then, hopefully, they will be less dependent on miracles when they get to college.

# The Emergence of Bilingual Education: An Overview of Curriculum Developments, Issues and Problems

By Stanley S. Seidner, Ph.D.

Within a relatively short time span of existence, bilingual education has succeeded in emerging as one of the most important, if not controversial, movements in the United States. What, in essence, is this phenomenon that has come to the forefront of educational issues? In its most basic definition, bilingual education suggests communication in two languages. The definition implies competence in either medium, which ranges from poor to native-like acquisition. In a more general sense, the term has been used to signify the incorporation of related but singular areas of multilingualism, biculturalism, multiculturalism and English as a second language. Amidst controversies and uncertainties, the evolution of bilingual programs became increasingly dependent upon legislation and judicial verdicts, emanating from federal and state circles.

## Legal Precedents

The 1968 and 1974 Bilingual Education Acts provided means by which local educational agencies could establish programs for non-English dominant students. The landmark Supreme Court decision of *Lau v. Nichols* in 1974, recognized the rights of this population to receive educational equity. Although it did not specifically en-

dorse bilingual education, the decision reinforced the parallel political and educational pillars, supporting the evolution of bilingualism on a national scale. Following the *Lau v. Nichols* decision, the cases of *Serna v. Portales Municipal Schools* and *Aspira of New York v. Board of Education*, produced bilingual programs (Teitelbaum and Heller, 1977.) Laws passed in Massachusetts, Texas, Illinois and New Jersey required the establishment of programs for students of limited English speaking ability.

## General Need for Program Development

Who are these students in need of special services from bilingual programs? A survey conducted by the Bureau of the Census in 1975 estimated the number at some fifteen million people, nationwide. Twenty-five per cent of this substantial number, or 3.6 million people within the 4 to 18 years of age category, were cited as needing, "special curriculums, if they are to make satisfactory progress through the school." (HEW Publication no. [OE] 77-0174). A report released by the National Center for Education Statistics in 1976 cited over two million individuals from predominantly non-English-speaking households as attending institutions from the levels of nursery school through college (HEW Publication no. NCES 76-400). Spanish was acknowledged as the most prevalent language spoken (69%)

by the school-age population of limited English speaking ability. Another report released by the National Center reflected a high school dropout rate of 25% of all fourteen to twenty-four year old Hispanic students in comparison with 10% of the total population. Some 20% of Hispanic students were shown by the 8th grade to be at least two grades below average (HEW Publication no. NCES 77-400). More recently, the National Assessment of Educational Progress Report of May, 1977, cited the pattern of Hispanic achievement levels in five learning areas as consistently below that "of the total national age level and of white students." (National Assessment of Educational Progress Report no. BR-2, p. 5).

It must be mentioned that research in the field of bilingual education has yielded inconclusive data concerning the effects of language upon educational potential. Nevertheless, students were found in a number of situations by linguistic researchers such as Elizabeth Peal and Wallace Lambert (1962) to perform better than monolinguals in verbal and non-verbal testing. In the St. Lambert experiment conducted by Lambert and G. Richard Tucker (1972), native French speakers were found lacking in any form of cognitive deficit or retardation which could be attributed to the experimental curriculum. Findings by Andrew Cohen (1975) in Redwood and Keith Hartwig (1971) in

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Sacramento among others (Macnamara, 1967), tend to corroborate the possible beneficial effects of bilingual education in subject areas. This brings us to bilingual curricula which are currently implemented.

### **Curriculum Approaches**

One of the outstanding characteristics of bilingual programs in the United States lies in the nature of their diversity. Attempts at identifying common elements in these programs and presenting them in a coherent, relevant scheme, were made by educators such as William Mackey (1970) and by Josua Fishman and John Lovas (1970). Mackey's initial criteria of typology correspond to the basic definition of bilingual education advanced earlier, in utilizing language as a medium of instruction. Accordingly, all programs are categorized within the realms of single or dual mediums of instruction. Educational institutions have the option of employing programs of either language maintenance or transfer for one of the two media models. The next criterion of curriculum direction corresponds to the expanded definition of bilingual education by offering the choices of accultural and irredentist programs. The two remaining criteria of distribution and change contribute to Mackey's typology a multiplicity totaling ninety different curriculum models, on home, regional and national levels. A comparatively simplified typology offered by Fishman and Lovas delineates four broad categories. The first one of transitional bilingualism considers the objective of language shifting, but fails to account for long-range programs utilizing the native language. An example of this model is found at the Follow Through Project at Corpus Christi, Texas. The second category of monoliterate bilingualism is exemplified by Christine McDonald's proposal for the El Rancho Unified School District at Pico Rivera, California. It concerns itself with the development of aural-oral skills

in two languages, but fails to develop literacy skills in the native tongue. The third classification of partial bilingualism, encountered in the Rough Rock Demonstration model for Navajo Indians, emphasizes fluency and literacy in both languages, but restricts native language literacy to mostly culturally related subject areas. Fishman and Lovas' last category of full bilingualism seeks the development of all skills in both languages.

An important development in bilingual curriculum development occurred with the examination of certain salient characteristics by A. Bruce Gaarder (1970), of seventy-six projects located in seventy cities. These programs were the first to receive grants under the Bilingual Education Act and included combinations of Latin American, European, Asian, and American Indian ethnolinguistic groups. The majority of curricula was found to employ the native language as the medium of instruction in regular subject areas. It is not unusual to find a local geographic area such as New York City, with simultaneous English as a second language, transitional bilingual, bilingual/bicultural, and multilingual multicultural programs for their different linguistic populations. The diversity of curriculum models on local, regional and national scales conforms to policies of educational pluralism and suggests innovative achievements in the area to serve as models for further design and development.

### **Identification and Assessment of Language of Different Approaches**

In spite of the diversity suggested by the cited examples of different approaches, all bilingual programs experience the need for proper language assessment, to facilitate appropriate screening and placement. Language assessment in terms of bilingual education is usually defined in terms of language dominance and language

proficiency. Broad spectrums of definitions offered by sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics hinder a consensus of agreement as to the meaning and implementation of these two terms. Many bilingual educators agree that language dominance infers criteria of comparing linguistic skills in two or more languages spoken by the individual, and the major portion of time the preferred medium is used at home and in other social situations. Language proficiency refers to the degree of linguistic competence demonstrated by the learner in the tested medium. The central issue for tests which fall in both categories, is that of validity. In reference to this problem, the Northwest Regional Laboratory produced a recent study (1976) which evaluated twenty-five language dominance and proficiency instruments. The tests were listed in the three categories of commercial, field stage and experimental measures. Out of twenty-five instruments, nineteen received poor rating in the criterion of measurement validity. Five tests received a rating of fair within this category and one instrument rated fair for one part and poor for another. Not one test received a rating of good within this category. Significantly, only three of the tests analyzed in the report were concerned with languages other than Spanish. It would appear that considerations other than educational prompt a number of local educational agencies to rely upon available assessment measures which are not necessarily intended for that use. Pressure emanating from the implied loss of federal funds upon the failure to comply with certain guidelines, as mentioned by Rosaura Sanchez (1976), contributes to the selection, for example, of tests designed to measure cognitive skills as language assessment instruments, because they are produced in Spanish. The implication is that language assessment instruments emerge as political vehicles due also to selective iden-



tification of needs within one or more particular ethnolinguistic groups, to the detriment of others. The above-mentioned Aspira lawsuit resulted in a Consent Decree whereby some 250,000 Hispanic students were administered the Language Assessment Battery in Spanish and in English. However, the test failed in its equity to account for approximately thirty-six other language groups in the city such as Soviet Jews (Seidner, 1977), Vietnamese, and Gujarati, although the English version was available for administration. New York and other cities in a similar situation would need definite federal and/or state financial assistance to embark upon such a massive undertaking. In view of population projections cited in an aforementioned Health, Education and Welfare Department report (HEW Publication no. [OE] 77-01704), on various ethnolinguistic groups, diversification of research and development of assessment measures to include these individuals would be most welcome.

#### Teacher Training

The existence of multiple language groups, as in the cited example of New York City, raises the question of qualified personnel to carry out programs of instruction. How many are needed? Where are they to be found? A federal estimate (HEW Publication no. [OE] 77-01704) estimated a potential nationwide need for some 129,000 bilingual educators. According to a survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics in 1975-1976, 218 institutions of higher learning offered training in bilingual education on elementary and secondary levels. Of this number, 155 institutions oriented courses toward Spanish-speaking groups, while twenty-six trained personnel to handle French, German, Greek, Italian, Portuguese and, to some small degree, Russian language populations. Another sixteen institutions prepared teachers for Native American students, and the



remaining twenty-one offered courses of study geared to Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, and Korean target populations. Some four million dollars was provided by the Office of Education in the form of fellowships to masters and doctoral candidates attending thirty-eight institutions in sixteen states. Resource Training Centers were expanded to assist an anticipated number of more than eight thousand school personnel a year. Suggested models for bilingual training programs in higher institutions of education were outlined by Robert Miller and Francisco Cordasco (in Cordasco, 1976) for institutions like Monclair State College in New Jersey. Centers, such as the one for Applied Linguistics in Arlington, Virginia, produced general guidelines concerning expectations of requirements for bilingual teachers (1974). Inherent in bilingual training programs is a revision of traditional philosophical approaches toward the target populations. As suggested by Gloria Zamora (1973), educators work with atypical populations as opposed to handicapped or disadvantaged students. Incompatibilities, according to a concept developed earlier by Jose and Bambi Cardenas, exist between typical and atypical schools or programs in the five areas of poverty, culture, language, mobility and societal perceptions.

The deduction follows that the philosophical distinctions ultimately influence the attitudes and expectations of the potential teachers. One should also stress that fluency in a particular target language does not mean that the individual is knowledgeable in bilingual methods, or the desired subject matter to be taught in select mediums of instruction. Such issues merit further exploration within the realm of formal training institutes and in-service centers.

### Concluding Remarks

Compared to established subject areas in the social sciences and humanities, bilingual education remains in a stage of relative infancy insofar as the lack of sufficient research in such crucial areas as second language learning, testing, and follow up applicable designs. It is also much too early to render any decision as to the ultimate effect of programs. Nor is it fair to suggest any wide-sweeping generalizations, other than perhaps that bilingual education has its share of successes and failures as in other areas of education. Although political movements, legislative and judicial decisions served bilingual education as midwife, promoter and protector, future expansion, let alone its *raison d'être*, invariably depends upon educational justifications. The ultimate evaluation of minimum success will be invariably based upon the ability of the program's clientele to function in society, on parity with their peers from the host language population.

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# *Non-Verbal Communication in the Classroom*

By Jan Sprague

Beyond our highly organized lectures and carefully worded handouts, we define and direct our classrooms with a myriad of unspoken messages. Daily, we make judgments and create impressions which shape further educational efforts and student self-concepts. We observe quickly which students will succeed, and we readily spot the troublemakers. We scan the remaining desks, although perhaps uneasily, knowing that many of their occupants will passively resist our continuing efforts to promote learning. Seldom are these judgments based on carefully composed verbal statements from the students, deliberately telling us how they want to be seen or treated. More likely, we pay attention to which classroom seats they occupy, how much eye contact they direct to us, and how often they volunteer answers or examples in class discussions. In return, our own nonverbal signals—smiles, frowns, raised eyebrows, and friendly or angry tones—convey our acceptance or rejection and our praises and punishments for their efforts.

As teachers highly skilled in verbal expression, we need also to recognize and control the educational climate we establish for students through our facial expressions, gestures, vocal cues, and control of classroom time and

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## EXERCISE

Videotape your class sessions. With a camera positioned to capture both teacher actions and pupil reactions, you can look for those student responses you seek and judge your nonverbal behaviors which seem to accompany the desired states. You can also analyze student responses you wish to avoid, looking for your actions which may encourage such behaviors.

Involve your students in the analysis, sharpening their awarenesses of nonverbal influence.

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space. Beyond such understanding, we need to question whether our classroom atmosphere, once established, can be altered, and whether our students, once labeled, will be allowed to grow and change.

### **Nonverbal Self-Expression**

Teachers and students reveal to each other far more than is ever consciously intended. Through facial expressions, gestures, and vocal cues, we express our attitudes and certify the truth of our verbal responses. The teacher's smile may convey acceptance of the student, understanding of an explanation, relief at finally gaining a "correct" answer, or simply enjoyment of the classroom activity. Equally as powerful, the teacher's

frown may be interpreted as an assignment of guilt, hostility, or confusion. Even a prolonged silent stare can create classroom tension far beyond that achieved with angry phrases. Observe your own classroom gestures. We typically snap our fingers for attention, hold a finger to our lips for silence, fold arms to express disapproval, point to focus attention, and nod our head to connote approval or acceptance. These and many other attempts to achieve classroom control never reach verbal expression. With vocal cues or para-language—speaking rate, pitch, and volume, we can emphasize important concepts. With sudden vocal variations, we can often regain the attention of an entire class.

Similarly, as receivers of nonverbal messages, students generate nonverbal cues which are often our best measures of classroom effectiveness. Our students provide us with multiple messages which we assume accurately indicate their levels of understanding, acceptance, and attention to the class material.

Educator and nonverbal communication researcher Charles Galloway provides evidence stressing the important role of an additional nonverbal message in the classroom—eye contact. In any setting, eye contact signals that the communication channel is open, inviting participation. The student who refuses to make eye contact with a teacher may be signaling, “I don’t know the answer,” or “I won’t participate in this class session.” To the student who is one of many others in a classroom, eye contact with a teacher can bestow special attention, “I am important,” or “I am recognized as existing here today.” Lack of teacher initiated eye contact may tell the student that recognition is withheld. For one more day, this class period will be spent filling time.

Galloway’s research indicates that most teachers dangerously ignore a large number of average-ability, “middle” students—students who neither reinforce us with brilliant answers testifying to our excellent teaching nor demand our disciplinary attention. These same students pass from class to class without individual recognition or challenge to become personally involved with their own learning experiences. However, the classroom can be made a personal experience for each student every day. We may not have time to speak with every student, but we can certainly make visual contact with every pupil several times during any class period<sup>1</sup>.

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## EXERCISE

Draw your classroom. Fill in the door, windows, teacher’s desk, student desks, bookcases, pencil sharpener, blackboard, and any other important objects.

1. In this learning environment, is there a clear “teacher territory” or “student territory?” How free is the movement between zones?
2. Does the arrangement of desks facilitate public distance learning (lecture-type of instruction) or social and personal distance learning (discussion or peer tutoring)?
3. Who controls or has most frequent use of your classroom “props of learning”—clock, windows, blackboard, pencil sharpener, etc.?
4. Will any changes in use of classroom space produce changes in the learning experience for teachers or students?

Involve your students. Plan alternatives for classroom space and object utilization. Experiment with these plans and attempt to evaluate the learning which takes place.

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The important role of these nonverbal messages in the continuing evolution of the students’ self-concepts should not be underestimated. All of our perceptions of physical, social, and psychological competencies have developed through “our experiences with ourselves, our interactions with others, and our position in a specific cultural and social environment.”<sup>2</sup> Before we could verbally interact in our surroundings, smiles, frowns, tones of voice, and touches provided evidence of our self-worth, competence, and acceptance. These same messages abound in daily classroom experiences. Sociogram-type measurement instruments indicate that our students know who we think is “smart” and who we think is “stupid.” They can predict who we will recognize in discussions, who will be rewarded, and who will be “picked on.” Primarily, they know how much effort and accomplishment we expect from them individually.

Evidence that students not only

recognize our expectations but meet these expectations comes from the research of Rosenthal and Jacobson. Teachers were informed that tests of their students indicated that the students were about to enter a period of high achievement. These teachers encouraged and observed the expected achievement, even though there was no truth to the reports of the tests.<sup>3</sup> The explanation for the higher student performance seems to be the high expectations of their teachers, and many of the cues of expectation could have been expressed nonverbally. Although ethical considerations prevent experimentation to determine the extent to which low teacher expectations can affect student performance, nonverbal indications of rejection or exclusion may be factors encouraging low performance. If we view learning as an active, involving process, we cannot afford to show students, verbally or nonverbally, any less than high expectations for their learning capabilities.

We need not assume that showing an honest response to student behavior is inappropriate in the classroom. However, we must be concerned with whether we allow the student room for growth or change once we have reacted.

### Classroom Time and Space

Nonverbal messages are in no way limited to personal behaviors. Serving as the context for individual nonverbal expression are the influences of classroom time and space decisions. If we want to know what is really valued in our school or in our own teaching, we need only consider when it is taught, how often it is taught, and whether it is likely to be eliminated if class time runs short. How much time is spent with student-centered discussions of course material? How much time is devoted to rewarding student participation? On the other hand, how much time is spent in teacher-oriented activities?

Anthropologist Edward T. Hall emphasizes that "space speaks." He explains that each individual exists in a "bubble" of personal space which others cannot comfortably violate, unless invited. The distances maintained between people express the nature of their relationships. Studying the North American culture, Hall identifies four distance zones: **intimate distance** (contact to eighteen inches), **personal distance** (one and a half to four feet), **social distance** (four to twelve feet), and **public distance** (twelve to twenty-five feet or more).<sup>4</sup> The distances which separate teachers and students

may well indicate our own beliefs about the nature of learning activities. If we claim to believe that the learning process should be personally involving for all students, yet lecture from the front of the room to students sitting in a back row along the opposite wall, we may find it difficult to convince these students to volunteer examples or questions. If we attempt to promote student discussion, yet arrange the student desks in straight rows, we should not be surprised when students in the back row show little interest in challenging the expressed opinions of students seated six rows ahead, especially when the only visual contact is with the back of heads. Perhaps dependence on alphabetical seating arrangements forces students with names occurring early in the alphabet into uncomfortable personal distance relationships with the teacher, while the student whose name occurs late in the alphabet may experience only public distance interaction. Another teacher distance factor to consider is the location from which most of our teaching is attempted. Do we work behind the desk, guaranteeing at least five feet more of separation from the students? Or, do we join the students in a circular seating arrangement, occupying a student-size desk?

In many classrooms, a clearly defined "teacher territory" and a distinct "student territory" coexist. Often these territories are adorned or defended by "props of learning"—blackboard here, clock visible in this section, windows visible from this area, or pencil sharpener available only from this location. In some classrooms, movement across territorial boundaries occurs continually. In other classrooms, movement into

another's territory assumes the proportions of an invasion. Our classrooms hold essentially the same pieces of furniture, but it is the manner in which we exercise power, pattern interaction, and coordinate events that determines the classroom climate.

It is often explained that the "good" or outstanding teacher **teaches people** as a primary goal. Content considerations are secondary. How important it becomes then to be aware of the nonverbal messages which we use to direct much of the educational enterprise. These nonverbal cues of teacher and student self expression influence greatly the students' attitudes toward school and learning, the students' feelings of self-worth and accomplishment, and even our own feelings of competence and satisfaction in education.

<sup>1</sup>Charles M. Galloway, *Teaching Is Communicating: Nonverbal Language in the Classroom*, Bulletin No. 29 (Washington D.C.: The Association for Student Teaching, 1970).

<sup>2</sup>Genelle Austin-Lett and Nan Sprague, *Talk to Yourself: Experiencing Intrapersonal Communication* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976), p. 2.

<sup>3</sup>R. Rosenthal and L. Jacobson, *Pygmalion in the Classroom* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968).

<sup>4</sup>Edward T. Hall, *The Hidden Dimension* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1966), pp. 113-129.

# High School Journalism as One Means of Developing Communication Skills

By Robert P. Knight

High schools wanting to increase the writing skills—or even the SAT verbal scores—of their students might recommend that they take one or more journalism courses. If the schools lack such credit courses, they might consider adding them with well-trained teachers. A well-taught journalism course can sharpen students' language skills, can motivate them to correct their grammar and spelling problems, and, as no other course, can make them aware of communicating to an audience.

## High School Journalism Today

Scholastic journalism today is a well-developed teaching field, especially in the midwest, the west coast, and the southwest. It has been estimated<sup>4</sup> that at least 40 percent (or about 12,000) of the U.S. high schools teach journalism. Formal journalism courses date back more than 50 years, and the first high school newspaper—a

handwritten edition of *The Students Gazette* at the Public Latin School in Philadelphia—appeared June 11, 1777<sup>32</sup>. National groups supporting scholastic journalism are in their second half century. State scholastic press associations, usually affiliated with journalism schools or departments, also are past the half-century mark in many states<sup>6</sup>. The number of full-time journalism teachers has been growing, as more sections or credit courses have been added (e.g. photography, yearbook, advanced journalism, and sometimes the mushrooming “mass media consumer” course, although this is not often taught by the journalism teacher). An ideal journalism curriculum includes a broader range of courses than in the past<sup>19</sup>.

Today vocational orientation rarely ranks as the course's major purpose. Teachers know that only a few students in any journalism class aspire to be professional journalists, even in these days of Woodward and Bernstein and of collegiate journalism enrollments which have increased more than

500 per cent in less than 20 years—from 11,000 in 1960 to more than 64,000 in 1977<sup>25</sup>. Writing and/or communication skills always are included in a central way, the purposes of the course. Students typically enroll because they are interested in writing for publication.

## Value of the Course

English and Hach, authors of the field's most used textbook—an Iowa State University Press best seller at more than a third of a million copies—consistently have argued (1977) for the writing value of the course:

*We believe that with all of the national publicity on how badly high school students write that we need to say again that there is no difference between good writing and good journalism...Studying journalism under an able teacher will help students become competent writers, give them a flair for writing interestingly, and enable them to communicate....they will learn to adapt their writing to any medium and any audience...There is something magic that can be done about writing in a journalism*

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course if it is well planned and taught.

The school newspaper, the yearbook, or the radio program, serves as the laboratory<sup>3</sup>. It is a demanding laboratory because the lab exercises go on display for the world to see and to criticize. Journalism students get feedback—sometimes quickly, sometimes heatedly—from friends, coaches, teachers, townspeople, administration.

Administrators once assumed the course existed to make possible or easier a school newspaper which would be a "positive public relations" tool for the school. Since the Tinker black armbands Supreme Court decision of 1969 and subsequent student press decisions by lower courts, administrators have come to realize, sometimes to their discomfort, that public school students have unique First Amendment rights and, as important, that today's well-trained student journalists indeed are capable of handling sensitive issues with journalistic excellence.

#### Views of Teachers

The journalism teacher sees an above average number of examples of students' writing. Yet those in scholastic journalism have not become as alarmed about deteriorating language skills as have newspaper executives and college journalism educators<sup>9</sup>. High school journalism teachers are not oblivious to the problem, but their perspective differs from that of the college teacher and especially that of the publisher, who despairs when he must use persons with weak skills in jobs which require refined skills.

Douglas Lane of McCluer North High School, Florissant, MO, may have summarized the high school journalism teacher's position:

*I'm not one of those who think basic skills should be taught only*

*elsewhere and not in journalism courses. I think if we expect students to use and master certain skills, we should take the trouble to teach them. For too long teachers had had the philosophy that skills should have been taught "before the students got this far," and so college teachers blame high school teachers, who blame junior high school teachers, who blame elementary teachers. I decide what skills I want my students to have and what skills they lack, and then I try to teach them, no matter what the course is, journalism or anything else.*

Ron Clemons, who has taught in the prestigious Blair Academy Summer School for Journalism in Blairstown, NJ, since 1969 and was its 1977 director, spends an intensive five weeks in his Journalism I class at Truman High School, Independence, MO, on grammar, except he calls it "copyediting." Even seniors, with no chance of making the newspaper staff, enroll because of it.

Clemons said it took him two years of teaching grammar to junior high school students, early in his career, to learn how to get across grammatical points. Now his journalism students, many of them top ranking scholars, take those skills with them to colleges all over the country.

In a mini-survey taken for this article, high school journalism teachers admitted they must help even their best students with spelling and other basics, such as punctuation, transition, and points of grammar, e.g., agreement.

However, these teachers rank their courses effective in teaching language skills since, in Lane's words, "the skills must be mastered to be effective in writing for a reading audience." Mike Brown of William Chrisman High School, Independence, MO, phrased it in a slightly different way: "Journalism offers a built-in

motivation in that what is written is not just for the eyes of the teacher...Being able to be proud of what they have published is important." Deanna Armstrong, Park Hill High School, Kansas City, MO, added: "Students are constantly under peer pressure to produce readable and grammatically correct work. Everyone sees it. They are much more critical of their work in print."

A further point was made by Kathy Craghead of Lincoln County R-IV High School in Winfield, MO:

*I consider my classes to be effective in teaching language skills in that nearly every day my students are at least getting practice in writing and using language skills—and they always read something, which I consider an integral part of absorbing language skills.*

Three national leaders in scholastic journalism, all affiliated with Blair, point to lessened reading by students as a major reason for deteriorating language skills.

"I feel that students are not reading enough. The only way a person can learn to write is to read and to write. Students are not using the language eloquently today," said Clemons, also JEA first vice-president.

While journalism students of the mid-1970s may have a broader scope of knowledge and a wider range of interest than those of the early 1960s, JEA national president Paula Simons said, "Listening has taken priority. Therefore, ability with words and a love and understanding of the power of words are not as evident as with students I taught even 10 years ago."

Bryce Lambert, in his twenty-sixth year as English teacher and twenty-fifth year as newspaper adviser at Deerfield (MA) Academy, noted, "You have to read to get an eye and ear for literary style." As

might be guessed, students in Lambert's spring elective journalism class are made to read a great deal.

Typically, journalism teachers are or have been English teachers. Usually they find themselves more effective in teaching grammar in their journalism than in their English classes. A few even concede they like working with remedial-level students in journalism. While many journalism teachers insist on a B in English for admittance, others, such as Rose Smith of Lafayette High School in Higginsville, MO, must admit all comers. She has learned to like that.

"I've had several students in journalism who initially had no real knowledge of what a sentence is. But once they're in the class they get hooked on journalism, on the idea of writing for the paper and on doing something for the school. One boy who didn't know a sentence from a fragment learned to write sports copy and did so for two years. In college, he made B's in English."

Some teachers, too, are learning of the untapped potential among minority students, for whom journalism can be an entree to improved skills and career possibilities (Minority journalists, 10 years after the Kerner Commission Report, still number 2 per cent or less in the U.S.).

Problems exist, of course<sup>7</sup>. But valuable spin-offs, especially in teacher sensitivity, are resulting from efforts of journalism schools and the Newspaper Fund to recruit talented high school minorities into journalism, e.g., Urban Journalism Workshops stressing journalistic skills; in-school programs and a national writing competition/scholarship for workshoppers.

Brown, who deals primarily with good students, concluded, "Having taught English courses for

seven years, I must admit that journalism is a much more efficient course in teaching language skills."

### Specific Benefits

Specifically, in what ways does the high school journalism class help develop language and communication skills?

My list, based on my more than 20 years contact with scholastic journalism, includes:

1. High school journalism emphasizes conciseness and directness in writing.

2. It stresses accuracy—which includes accuracy in names, spelling, facts—hence, precision in communicating.

3. It teaches the dangers of loose or inaccurate language, which might result in libel or misunderstandings, for example.

4. It teaches proofreading and editing skills and ingrains in students a critical awareness of everything they and others write.

5. It teaches the use of a stylebook, that is, a consistent approach in matters of capitalization, abbreviation, numbers, punctuation (commas, apostrophes, semicolons, etc.).

6. It teaches the wise use of sources: How to interview<sup>1</sup>; how to ferret out information, as in a library or from documents; how to get to the heart of an issue in limited time.

7. In both writing and editing, it teaches the need for selectivity or decision making in presentation of material. Because space is limited, a person must learn what to omit and what to include.

8. It teaches how to handle opinion in a fair and balanced manner, and it emphasizes that reporters must omit their own opinions ("editorializing").

9. It teaches different styles of writing for different purposes and/or different audiences: news, sports, editorials, reviews, columns, ads, etc.

10. It gives practice, especially in feature writing, in effective use of anecdotes, narrative, and quotations (both direct and indirect.)

11. It teaches journalistically excellent handling of sensitive issues, through precise reporting, wise choice of words, headlines, illustrations, etc.

12. In layout, graphics, and photography, it stresses attractive packaging to appeal to readers.

13. In every aspect, it concentrates on the needs of the reader<sup>26</sup>.

14. Finally, on the inter-personal level, it teaches young people how to deal with others: Adults and teenagers they must interview; merchants they must convince of the value of reaching the lucrative youth market through the newspaper; fellow staff members, from whom they must learn to take directions or whom they must learn to direct (the hardest lesson for a 17-year-old).

### Obstacles

We have been talking about the ideal situation, of course. Obstacles to effectiveness certainly exist:

1. In far too many instances, an inadequately prepared teacher is asked to teach journalism, and is lucky to keep his/her head above water and the publications out of journalistic trouble and out of serious debt<sup>14</sup>.

2. While at least 70 per cent of the states now have some certification requirements for the teaching of journalism<sup>33</sup>, few, if any, have serious enforcement procedures. We in schools and departments of journalism are partly to blame because we have given scant attention to the preparation of journalism teachers<sup>17</sup>.



3. Too many principals fail to support a strong journalism program or they effectively suppress its development because they mistakenly fear the "power" of an open press or because they misperceive the true nature of public relations. The professionals in public relations know it isn't credible to present only a rosy picture of their clients<sup>5</sup>. Watson (1968) found that the greatest single contribution a principal can make to achieve an excellent journalism program is to hire a qualified teacher and then to step back and give him/her the responsibility for running the program.

4. Counselors often misunderstand the motivation that students need to succeed in journalism and counsel lazy or uninterested students into it as an elective. Students sometimes enroll because they think it's a license to roam the halls (In some bad programs, it is).

5. Economic problems, especially increased costs of printing, are forcing many newspapers to decrease their frequency of publication, thereby lessening the opportunity for students to get published.

6. Hard pressed teachers, with too much to do and too many other classes or too many students<sup>18</sup>, find they don't have the time they need to work with students individually on their writing. Nor do they have time, given the press of publications deadlines, to insist on as much rewriting as they should.

7. Finally, it must be conceded that some teachers and some classes fall into sloppy patterns of writing—the rote, tried approaches which turn off readers.

Recently we have been talking about developing a videocassette presentation which would show the value high school journalism has had for three different types of individuals; say a Phi Beta Kappa senior in history at Harvard; the editor of the 40,000-circulation *Daily Texan* at the University of Texas;

and a young, successful plumber. Our point would be the same as that made earlier by Moses<sup>20</sup> and Hach<sup>15</sup>: The journalism course offers life-preparation skills. Good communications happen to be among those skills.

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# The Need for Mass Media

By Louise M. Oxnevad

Radio stations, newspaper offices, TV and movie studies—these used to be the only places where mass media training was considered necessary or even helpful. Those days have now passed. Media training is an important part of every high school student's education today—a part that should be neither underestimated nor ignored.

Training in mass media involves much more than learning about movies or reading newspapers. The skills and knowledge of writing, media equipment, broadcasting, advertising, and photography are things that can be utilized in many ways in later life. Whether used in business or in home life, a media education is one that is not wasted.

Journalistic writing, when done correctly, is a skill that will be utilized often. Learning to write in a journalistic style is learning to write concisely and to the point. It is writing with a minimum of unnecessary adjectives, with quotes cited from specific factual

courses. The "inverted pyramid" style used teaches one to put down the most important points of a story right away. This type of writing style can prove invaluable when writing company reports, taking notes, even preparing group presentations in an organized manner.

Journalistic writing also trains one in searching for information—the who, what, where, and how of finding the correct sources. This is helpful when working on a school or company project, or simply finding out information for personal needs. It teaches one to become aware of all the many possibilities for finding information. Journalistic writing can also be useful in one's personal life—writing to colleges, job resumes, and letters seeking employment. A short, clearcut letter will be much more impressive than a windy, complexly structured one.

For the majority of Americans, film and TV are media to be observed and enjoyed rather than participated in. However, while most people will never act in a TV show or movie, many will find the opportunity to use its equipment. Video tape players, movie cameras, and other types of equipment are being used more and more in high schools and elementary schools.

College students will find the use of this type of equipment even more helpful in special projects and reports. Media classes train students how to use, handle, and care for such expensive equipment; a must if the purchase and use of this equipment is to be feasible.

Another aspect of TV and film found in the business world is the company training film or news program. Company training films are nothing new, having been used for years. The equipment for producing these films is becoming more and more complex, however, and the need for skilled workers is greater. There is also another, newer area—the company news program. According to the March 14, 1977 issue of **Business Week** magazine, TV programs are being used with increasing frequency instead of other forms of interoffice communication such as memos, bulletin boards, and newsletters. **Business Week** states that a number of major U.S. corporations, including several insurance companies, are using these TV shows to report company news, feature stories, employee information, and general interest items. In order to make such programs successful, they must be produced by skilled, creative, and knowledgeable employees.

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Training in broadcasting benefits the individual in teaching a person to speak clearly, and in a strong, pleasant voice. This is a skill that can be utilized in whatever one's chosen field might be. Another benefit of broadcasting experience is poise and self-confidence. In today's competitive business world, personal poise and confidence can be determining factors in a job interview.

Advertising or photography also benefits one in daily living. Learning about advertising teaches understanding of the different types of selling techniques confronted every day. It helps people

recognize different types of ads, what they really mean, and how to read between the lines. And photography as a hobby is becoming more and more popular. Media classes can teach not only the basics of photography, its equipment and how to use it, but also what is needed to set up a dark room and what is not. The basics of good design and symmetry, that can be used in anything from architecture to arranging pictures on a wall, can be learned from photo layouts.

But mass media training benefits most with a keener understanding and awareness of

the world around us. Whether it teaches the difference between an editorial and a news article, or how to use a video tape machine, or how to take a good photograph, media training is not wasted. It widens one's horizons, opens the door to new ideas, teaches people to be curious and aware. The wide variety of media today record, report, and interpret every aspect of our society. It takes understanding of how these media work to digest this information and mold it into our own beliefs. For this reason alone, mass media training should be part of every American student's curriculum.

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## Media Tomorrow

By Molly J. Wiseman

It is 1988. A high school journalism-media class is preparing its daily news offerings for its public. The public includes the school's students, high school students in other parts of the nation, and residents in the school's community. The television equipment, videodisc player, picture phone, laser beam, and high speed printer are ready to roll.

This particular day's news includes information on a school bond referendum, a record-breaking swim meet time, an industrial fire in the city, registration procedures for second semester

and an interview with the state's governor.

The picture phone has been used to obtain the interview with the governor. The message was videotaped and will be aired via cable TV to area residents. A videodisc was made of the swim meet, with a short segment shown to area viewers, but with the entire disc sent to other schools in the nation with swimming competition. The industrial fire was covered via holography, or through the use of the laser beam. Its presentation will look much more realistic with the laser than through ordinary photography. Television and high speed printing equipment were used to cover the bond referendum and registration procedures. Print material will be shown on TV for these topics, with

printouts available to residents and students at the touch of a button.

Residents and students will receive their news material at school and in homes. It will be viewed on eight-foot wall video screens and from printout systems attached to their video consoles.

Although to some this daily news description might sound absurd, it could be possible in just 10 years. Every item mentioned in the description has already been invented. With the body of knowledge doubling every 10 years,<sup>7</sup> student news dissemination systems might be even more advanced than this at that time.

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Some high school students are already using radio and TV equipment, are already broadcasting to communities, are publishing daily and weekly newspapers, are producing plastic phonograph records of events and are recording other material on Super 8mm film. Today's high school students have grown up with the media and are eager to learn about it and to use it.

However, most schools have not grown up with the students. They are far behind in both teaching and utilizing media. Teachers today seem to conduct their classes as if the only media invention around was the printing press and the electric plug does not exist.<sup>5</sup> The understanding of media has not been an integral part of many schools' curricula.

Videodiscs, which resemble 12-inch records, are being produced now by RCA and Phillips-MCA<sup>8</sup>. It has been estimated that videodisc units will probably cost about \$400-500, with individual discs costing about \$10. The major production companies will probably manufacture them at first, with the discs holding movies, concerts and major sports events. However, it is conceivable that individual production centers might be possible, such as video tape recorders are now. If this occurs, high school students could make these discs, easily store them, and trade them with other schools in the nation.

Laser technology is expanding constantly. It is possible that in 10 years, 3-D cameras might be available. Holography, invented in 1947<sup>1</sup> means a three-dimensional picture is formed that appears identical to the object "photographed". Students may be

able to use this method to present very lifelike productions.

Television possibilities have no end. Already, cable TV is being used in nine per cent of the nation; and by 1990 cable TV may climb to the 90 per cent level in urban areas<sup>1</sup>. Students could use cable TV for area/city broadcasts as well as interconnecting with cable systems in other parts of the nation. Media students in schools throughout the country might have their own network via a cable system.

#### **Studies in Mass Media**

In a study completed in 1973 by James A. Crook<sup>2</sup>, it was revealed that in the nation, comprehensive mass media courses and units were being taught in 20 per cent or less of the high schools. Mass media units in English, social studies, speech and consumer education were more common.<sup>3</sup>

In a survey taken of its members in 1975-76, the Journalism Education Association, an organization comprised mainly of high school journalism teachers/advisers, found that less than five per cent taught a mass media course.

State department of education officials have projected an increase in the number of mass media courses in the next five years with some schools actually requiring mass media course credit for graduation.<sup>3</sup>

But where will the schools, teachers and administrators be in 10 years? Far behind their students, unless they begin mass media courses now to at least keep up with the items.

#### **Technological Developments**

In 10 years, picture phones, which are now on the market, might be commonplace in homes, schools, and businesses. They are

utilized mostly now for business conferences and for the deaf. Media students might make use of them for carrying out interviews, and then videotaping the information for later transmission.

Updated news in semi-printed form on television is already in use by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). CEEFAX currently reproduces a 100-page issue of news and information on a TV screen<sup>6</sup>. To receive this transmission, viewers must have subscribed and have special decoders. It takes 15 seconds to go one page at a time from beginning to end of the 100 pages. However, viewers may select, by viewing an index, items which they want to read, push a code button, and have the page appear on the screen. According to Derek Cutner of the BBC, this system is mainly used now for business purposes, but has major plans for expansion<sup>4</sup>.

According to Walter Cronkite on a CBS "21st Century" television program, it might be possible for a person to receive an individualized printed newspaper in the home from a communications center. As early as 1969, the Japanese daily, *Asahi Shimbun*, was publicly demonstrating a low cost "television" system for printing newspapers in the home.<sup>7</sup> This idea could revolutionize high school publications.

Instant printing has been upon the general public for several years. Photocopying has so replaced carbon paper that many current high school students have no idea what, "Give me a carbon of that report," even means. They have never used nor needed carbon paper. Even photographs may be copied nowadays by several instant copy machines.

Easily within 10 years, and already in use by some high schools, students will be rapid printing daily and weekly newspapers of several pages in length with varied size headlines, cartoons, advertisements and photos. In seconds, hundreds of copies could be spewed out of a school copy machine at a low price. This situation could make "bulletins" popular, meaning students could conceivably publish several editions a day, unless they would opt for the video or other electronic coverage methods.

In a decade, journalistic methods of covering school and community news events by high school students will probably not resemble the twice-monthly tabloid newspaper of 1978. A year's coverage will include instantly printed newspapers or newsmagazines, videotapes, videodiscs, plastic records and maybe even holographic images. And unless the high schools of the nation make a sudden attempt at teaching aspects of mass media, the students and their own ingenuity will far outdistance their schools, administrators and teachers.

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## *Sex Bias in Language: An Issue Worth Talking About*

By Barbara Bate

### Introduction

During this decade, the women's movement in America has had a significant impact on the education, employment, and social interaction patterns of American citizens. Academic publishers, governmental agencies, and individuals have made or recommended changes in communication practices in order to increase chances for fair treatment of the sexes. Women and men of all ages are being affected to some degree by these changes.

Within this context, the issue of sex equity in language continues to bring mixed and often negative responses. Some individuals see language issues as central to all interactions among humans; they assert that all communication is limited by the structures and connotations of American English. Thus male-oriented language forms convey a patriarchal or male-oriented perspective on the world<sup>(7)</sup>. Another perspective on language issues is that changes in attitudes and actions must precede changes in language patterns. Since words used by a biased teacher or employer are seen as simply reflections of external situations, the situations and not

the words are considered the proper target for change strategies<sup>(5)</sup>.

How can the seriousness of sex bias in language be determined? No complete answer to this question is likely to emerge in the near future. But interested people can deal with the issue more effectively if they understand how humans use and respond to language in daily life. People differ widely in their awareness of words and in their sensitivity to linguistic bias or imbalance. Recognizing these differences makes it possible to think of the language controversy as an interpersonal communication issue rather than as a matter of "right" and "wrong" opinions about language.

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### Clarifying the Controversy

One way that teachers can help students to consider varying opinions regarding language bias is through providing information about the assumptions made by proponents of various views. An interview study with university teachers discussing the nonsexist language controversy showed that these individuals differ significantly, not only in their own language preferences, but also in their assumptions about language and human behavior. Such differences in assumptions offer a basis for showing why people disagree so energetically about sex bias in language (1) (2).

1. *Language Change?* The university teachers most opposed to changing gender-related forms such as "chairman" or "lady poet" indicate that they believe language changes slowly, like a glacier, not through dramatic individual action. Those most supportive of changing to inclusive language forms describe language as a human tool, constantly in the process of changing in response to human choices and priorities. For people who see language change as natural, constant, and guided by human needs, innovations such as "chairperson" tend to make sense. People who see language as a structure to be preserved, in contrast, see coined words as dangerous disfigurements of the mother tongue.

2. *A Band of Revolutionaries?* Closely related to the first conflict in assumptions is the question of what role the language change agent is to play. Believers in language tradition as a central value often describe attempts to change "he" to "he or she" or "mankind" to "humankind" as attempts to dismantle both linguistic and social structures. Since "he" and "man" terms are in common and frequent usage, these forms provide a frequent target for the change agent and a source of defense for the more traditional communicator. The proponents of tradition may cite longstanding

### Practical Suggestions for Fairness in Language

After assumptions have been clarified and new perspectives considered, many people still have a problem with sex bias in language: How can I speak and write fairly and clearly, without tripping over myself?

The following examples offer alternatives to traditional forms. Each is intended to be inclusive, convenient, and clear. These resources can suggest further possibilities for bias-free language; a great many inventive solutions remain to be explored.

#### Avoid a choice of gender

1. By plural forms

*Instead of:*

A student can choose his adviser as late as his senior year.

*Try:*

Students can choose their advisers as late as their senior year.

2. By rephrasing to omit pronouns or the necessity to choose a male or female noun

*Instead of:*

When a youth gets a part time job, he is likely to face increased stress.

*Try:*

When getting a part time job, you are likely to face increased stress.

3. By using labels that show the activity, not the gender of the actor

*Instead of:*

mailman, stewardess, lineman, housemother  
mail carrier, flight attendant, line worker, house parent

*Try:*

4. By using common gender "they" in writing as well as in oral communication

*Instead of:*

Everyone who wants to play should bring his instrument to tonight's informal concert.

*Try:*

Everyone who wants to play should bring their instruments to tonight's informal concert.

#### Choose inclusive forms

1. By using "he or she," "she or he," "s/he," or "he/she"

These forms work best when used in combination with the suggestions above. A large number of "he or she" forms in a short passage will be less smooth to read or hear than one such form in the context of a variety of nouns and noun phrases.

*Try:*

A student can choose an activity as late as his or her senior year.

## 2. Alternating female and male pronouns

This strategy can help raise the awareness of others when customary sex role references are avoided.

*Try:* A professor...she; the housekeeper...he; the attorney...she.

## 3. By using as examples persons of both sexes

*Try:* Researchers such as Margaret Mead and Franz Boas have revealed how people live in widely varying cultures around the world.

### Try to avoid doing these things

#### 1. Stating that you mean "he" generically and continuing to use only "he" to refer to unspecified persons.

*Problem:* Whatever you say, listeners are still more likely to receive images of males.

#### 2. Saying inclusive pronouns with long pauses or heightened vocal emphasis.

*Problem:* Some listeners will interpret these behaviors as antagonistic toward women or feminism. Others will simply lose your train of thought.

### When in doubt

#### 1. Ask people what they prefer to be called.

#### 2. Assume that people are human beings first and that women and men are presumed worthy of respect in whatever they are choosing to do.

### Last lines about letters

Several methods for beginning a letter can avoid sex-biased wording

Dear Director of Education:

Dear **Village Voice** Staff:

Dear Barbara Bate:

Dear people:

All of these suggestions for practical fairness in language are based on a single belief. The belief is that language can affect human experience both positively and negatively. Words can limit, confuse, and stereotype. But words can also communicate the encouraging conviction that what is possible for any human being is possible for oneself as well.

custom and social consensus to oppose the revolutionary idea of changing terms as basic as "he" and "man." Proponents of change, on the other hand, argue that the very pervasiveness of these basic terms makes them important to bringing into consciousness, so that assumptions about social reality can be examined. Evolution is not sufficient to change human awareness claim the proponents of change: an individual, mental revolution must occur.

3. *Language Effects?* Whether and how much people are affected by language usage provides another major point of contention about language change. If "he-man" terms are pervasive in everyday use, for example, what difference do they make in the ways individuals experience the world? Proponents of traditional forms argue that people are able to distinguish between generic and gender-specific uses of "man" so that they are not harmed by the double use of the same form. Change proponents, in contrast, cite research results and anecdotal evidence that receivers — especially females — take longer to process information, show more evidence of uncertainty, and make fewer responses to advertised job openings, when confronted by messages worded as "a person...he" or "wanted: lineman"<sup>(6)</sup> (3). No research has established conclusively the extent to which children's self-concepts are affected by language bias. But the existence of serious linguistic imbalance in instructional materials has now been documented<sup>(8)</sup>.

4. *Changing Personal Behavior?* People who differ about how language operates can be expected to differ about how they themselves will deal with change. Active proponents of language change describe their own changes in language habits as gradual and cumulative, often occurring over a period of one or two years. Some individuals begin by omitting or altering one especially bothersome term, later expanding

their efforts to other language forms as awareness increases. For persons not convinced of the seriousness of language bias, the prospect of changing one's own language patterns appears difficult, silly, or both. One could look foolish if a key term were overlooked or a tricky word — such as "Ms." — mispronounced. Change in language habits is perceived by traditional speakers as demanding, sudden, and full of boobytraps for the unwary communicator.

#### Exploring Perspectives on Language Change

Individuals coping with questions of whether, how, or why they should alter their language habits deserve consideration in interpersonal discussions, whether they are currently for, against, or uncertain about gender-related language changes. Often the assumptions noted above derive from long-held beliefs. Nevertheless, even longstanding opposition to language change can be affected by information which is presented in a climate of reason rather than aggression.

Perspectives supportive of language change deserve to be presented to persons in educational settings, or in any setting, as clearly and effectively as possible. The information or angle of vision presented may not alter the opinions of a given receiver, but additional material can help people to carry their discussion beyond the point where their personal experiences differ or clash.

The first angle of vision which can facilitate discussions of language bias is the *intent-effect perspective* on communication events. No matter how clear my motives may be in making a statement to you, you will not perceive the statement precisely as I sent it. The effect of any message, in other

words, will always differ to some degree from the intent of the message source. For example, a male college recruiter may know that when he talks to a high school class about the typical college student as "he" his intent is to include both male and female students. A female high school student in the audience, however, may have an equally clear belief that the recruiter is discussing only male students, and she may perceive herself as not included in the speaker's examples. Neither is "wrong," and neither is likely to find out the other's perceptions. Most important, the female student may make assumptions or decisions differently depending on whether she believes the recruiter's words are intended to include her.

A second angle of vision for considering the language bias issue has to do with *how children learn*. There is evidence that very young children begin to perceive and talk about concrete objects and persons, moving gradually toward more abstract reasoning. The links between learning processes and language use can be illustrated by two stories about actual three year old children:

The first child, Emily, had been told by her parents, both of whom are writers and teachers, that people work at all sorts of different occupations. Emily had begun to see people doing various activities, and she frequently said sentences beginning, "Mommy, I want to be a ..." or, "Daddy, I'm going to be a ..." One day she looked out the front door and saw a milk truck being driven down the street toward her house. As the truck and its male driver approached the house, Emily turned to her mother and said, "Mommy, I want to be a milk-..."

she never finished the word. It is not possible to say exactly what she was thinking at that moment, but it is clear that if she had heard the word "milkman," some kind of mental operation led her *not* to apply the term to herself that day.

Another three year old, Nathan, came into the kitchen one afternoon while his mother was preparing food at the stove. Nathan's mother spends most of her time at home, and his father teaches at a university. Nathan suddenly announced to his mother in a strong voice, "Mommy, I want to be a *girl*." His mother gulped, waited a few seconds while she thought about the situation, and then asked, "Why do you want to be a girl, Nathan?" His answer came quickly: "Because I want to cook, too!"

Both Emily and Nathan dealt with the visual and verbal worlds around them and tried to make their own conclusions. Were they limited more by language, or by the actual circumstances of the women and men they observe? That answer does not come quickly. The argument can be made, however, that the children's difficulties lie in the tenuous linkage between language and the physical world. Because words and the nonverbal world are interdependent, neither can change significantly without some impact on the other. Thus some assert that "milkman" will remain an appropriate term until the time when 50% of the milk truck drivers are female. Yet what of the very young children who try out their imaginations in relation to the world they see *and* the words they hear? Their images of themselves and of their possibilities may be restricted unnecessarily by language forms which suggest that human activities are to be placed in boxes labeled Male and Female.



A third angle of vision for discussing sex bias and language involves the concept of *self-respect through self-reference*. The contemporary histories of American Blacks and Native Americans, for example, indicate that when groups of people decide to refer to themselves by a new term, their new labels both presuppose and help to bring about increased self respect. Similarly, a female who wishes to be called a woman instead of a girl, chick, or old lady is exercising a human right no less reasonable than expressing a food preference or stating whether one wants to be called by a nickname or given name.

Like food and first name preferences, certain gender-based

labels will be preferred by some persons more than by others. Some secretaries report that they do not mind being called "the girls" or "the gals," while their own daughters or nieces strongly prefer being referred to as "women." The essential point in these situations is that all persons who have opinions about the labels referring to them have a chance to express their preferences and to be taken seriously when they speak.

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**On Our Cover...**The Rosetta Stone, a broken slab of black basalt, was the key to unlocking lost Egyptian languages. The oldest surviving hieroglyphics date from around 3100 BC.

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**Hieroglyphics...**Although it may have begun as pictograms, the Egyptian language devised symbols for every consonant sound in their speech. Hence, as our illustrations show, they used a rebus to "spell" the desired word (like combining "bee" and "leaf" in English to show the word "belief").

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# MEDIA CORNER

By Howard Swan

Educators are experiencing a great deal of criticism in recent months for their failure to turn out students who can read and write. While this criticism is not new, it comes at a time when schools are under severe financial pressures brought on by increased operating costs coupled with declining enrollments. The public, in turn, is frustrated with the eroding purchasing power of their paychecks and - as night follows day - vote against raising the taxes they pay for the support of schools.

It goes without saying that schools mirror society and further, that there is "enough blame to go around." A comic strip character said it so well: "we have met the enemy and it is us."

On a positive note, the dedicated educator is committed to improving instruction. It is with this aim that this column suggests media resources for teaching communication skills.

## 16mm Films

**The Strange Case of the English Language** (CBS News Production)  
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Rental \$35, Purchase \$525.

This film is useful for creating interest in the English language as it is spoken and written today. Film clips of famous speakers and interviews of language experts by Harry Reasoner provide an enjoyable experience.

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## Sound Filmstrips/Sound Slides

**Watch your Language: Usage (and Abusage)**

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