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## **A comparative study of the written English in composition classes with the English in written work in the social studies**

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE WRITTEN ENGLISH IN  
COMPOSITION CLASSES WITH THE ENGLISH  
IN WRITTEN WORK IN THE SOCIAL  
STUDIES

By

Nelle Strobel

Contributions of the Graduate School  
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in Education

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N. L. S.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### I. GENERAL STATEMENT

Even though an opinion is held by a foremost authority or friend, it does not necessarily follow that it is a fact. On what has the person based his conclusion? The statement should be made on strictly scientific conclusions on data found. More and more there is the tendency to evaluate educational procedures through experiments. The writer has made investigation the proof of her opinion.

Functional grammar should be taught, and in truth it is the only grammar. The reader and the writer may not agree about the meaning of the term functional. The one meaning foremost in the minds of teachers of English is that a study of grammar should improve the style of composition. In this study the student is cultivating what he attains in no other way--the ability to compose correct, accurate, and meaningful sentences wherever he is and in whatever situation he finds himself.

Verna Newsome writes: "The greatest contribution which grammar study can make is to the mastery of the sentence; to the unfailing recognition of the sentence unit in speech and

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writing and the power of building clear, vigorous, and varied sentences and of interpreting their structure."<sup>1</sup>

## II. THE PROBLEM OF THE STUDY

Since English is an interdepartmental subject, the writer is vitally interested in the "follow up" of the results of her efforts outside the English composition classroom. The same raw materials--words, sentences, and paragraphs--are used in all classes and all classes can contribute to the training in expression. In order for her efforts to bear fruit the English teacher must work in close cooperation with the other departments in which students express themselves in coherent, unified paragraphs which should be properly punctuated and capitalized. If the standards of usage in the other classes are as high as those in the English classes, these other subjects have a great contribution to make to efficiency in the use of correct language; and she hopes that the principles of composition taught will be applied to other written expression, for instance in the social studies.

There is no such thing as "business English", or this or that English, but there is one and only one language art--the one which trains the student in such a way that the result is an expression of his thoughts in a pleasing, impressive, accurate, and correct written form.

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<sup>1</sup>Verna L. Newsome, "Making English Grammar Function", English Journal, High School Edition, Vol. 23, p. 48-57.

Bobbitt states that the English teachers "have learned to judge their work as satisfactory only when they see the results in effective operation with a larger area--in the non-English classroom, on the playground, in the home--in all intellectual and social relationship where the printed page is being interpreted and where thought and emotion are finding exercise in a disciplined and vigorous expression, both oral and written."<sup>2</sup>

The faith that there is truth in the old theory of transfer of training and the desire to prove partially at least or refute the frequently expressed opinion that the types of errors made by juniors in written composition in an English course and those made in the other content subjects are very similar, have fostered such a study as is described in this thesis.

### III. NEED FOR SUCH A STUDY

This is the age of efficiency, in which every man is seeking the most fitting methods of performing the operation of his profession or calling. The business man seeks the most efficient system of filing and bookkeeping; the manufacturer organizes his labor force and machinery so

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<sup>2</sup> Franklin Bobbitt, The Curriculum, (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1918), Chapter I, pp. 3-4.

as to use every ounce of effort so that it will result in the greatest possible return; the railroads are replacing their old for new in order to be able to make their patronage more comfortable and to limit the time for traveling from one place to another to the minimum; surgeons spend many hours planning the best way to perform this or that operation to conserve time, energy, and the life of the patient. If these efforts are necessary for securing efficiency in these fields, why isn't it very essential for an English teacher to seek the best possible way of securing accuracy, correctness, and forcefulness in the expression of the students in her care?

There is a general lack of cooperation between the teachers of other content subjects and the teachers of language. The teacher of social studies or science says that he is too busy teaching his own subjects to give much time, if any, to the language side. George Reynolds has said that "The attainment of the necessary knowledge and skill of expression cannot be left to subject matter courses in other departments. The other teachers probably have neither the interest nor the skill to give such training. These other classes may furnish opportunity for practice of skills well started. The results of it will carry over only if the pupils and all the teachers of the school will they shall."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> George F. Reynolds, "Integration of English Literature with Related Subjects", Summary, English Journal, 24:593-4, S. 35.

"There are at least three important factors in education; namely, pupil, methods and material, and goals. The teacher needs to know the psychology of the pupil, the proper goals to which the pupil is to be developed, and the methods and material which should be employed to develop the pupil from his initial ability to the desired goal.

"What does measurement have to do with this process?"<sup>4</sup>

As the quotation states, the teacher must have at hand all knowledge of a pupil if she is to help him to the best of his capabilities.

But again quoting McCall: "We must know not only what qualities exist, but also in what amount they exist."<sup>5</sup>

A comparative study of the results obtained from the written work of a class of juniors in English composition and the social studies should afford an avenue through which information might be secured to further a more effective method of procedure in the teaching of functional or practical grammar. There is truly no absolute measure in the teaching profession, but this small study will throw some light on the matter, especially in relation to Gerstmeyer Technical High School in which this study is made.

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<sup>4</sup>William A. McCall, How to Measure in Education, (The Macmillan Company, 1922), Chapter I, pp. 10-11.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 10-11.

If as Szekler says, "Integration is becoming the keynote of modern education, "<sup>6</sup>why not use all possible means of integration?

#### IV. TECHNIQUE IN STUDY

The material of this study is very largely the result of experimentation in comparing the written work of forty-six students in junior English composition and the written work done by the same group in the social studies. The written expression of this class of forty-six in English composition and the social studies was carefully checked for the kind and frequency of errors in punctuation, sentence structure, grammar, spelling, diction, and mechanics.

Eighteen written compositions, nine in English and nine in history, one page in length, were secured from each student. These papers represented the typical type of written work that was carried on over a period of eighteen weeks, or one semester, in Gerstmeyer Technical High School, Terre Haute, Indiana. The study was limited to history because not enough written expression for the investigation was done in other content subjects. The data from the experiment which were used to ascertain what English errors are habitual will be described in the pages that follow.

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<sup>6</sup>Juliet M. Szekler, "Integration", English Journal, High School Edition, 24: 476-480.

## V. USES OF THE STUDY

Since language is man's most significant social invention and his most indispensable instrument of thought, then this study should serve to create a language consciousness so that the pupils will accept the responsibility for correctness in all expression, and to help the students to be conscious of good English usage, and to form better English habits. It should be the duty of every educationist to give or see that the child has an adequate language or code; so this study may be used to establish a scientific basis for the direction of effort and correlation of English work in English composition with the English used in other content subjects.

From a study made by Edith Shepherd she concludes that "to be effective the teaching of English usage at the high school level must (1) establish in the mind of the pupil a clear understanding of a sufficient body of language principles and conventions so that he is able to conform to the standard usage of educated people; (2) develop in the pupil an attitude of responsibility for making his speech and writing conform to such standards."<sup>7</sup>

Evidence of attitude is to be secured not from tests but from a study of the regular written work of the pupils

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<sup>7</sup> Edith Shepherd, "The Attitude of Junior High School Pupils Toward English Usage", School Review, Volume 34, pp. 574-586.

in English and in content subjects, is the conclusion the writer gets from the Reynold's study.

Much time is lost on the detailed study of grammar. If there were drill on the correction of the errors that are most frequently made, more accuracy would be accomplished in a shorter time. Perhaps, too, Pendleton's objective "The attitude of expecting oneself without hesitation or doubt to write good English"<sup>8</sup> would become a reality instead of a part of a great dream.

## VI. OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY

Noted Educators say that education means growth, development in social efficiency. The study of and drill in the language art is growth in the use of good English.

Bobbitt states that "the mother-tongue is man's primary instrument of social intercourse and intercommunication. It is also the vehicle of his thought. An instrument which is used almost continuously throughout one's waking hours for thought or communication, and throughout one's entire lifetime, should be a good instrument for the purpose, not a crude, cheap one; and that it should be well understood and appreciated in order that it be carefully and intelligently used. As one's motor car or one's clothing,

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<sup>8</sup>  
 Charles S. Pendleton, Social Objectives of School English, (Publisher--Author), p. 37.

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Franklin Bobbitt, The Social Foundations of Education, The Century Company, 1913, p. 107.



one's language should be of good design, correct, polished, accurate, and socially pleasing; not just anything that will crudely express crude thought."<sup>9</sup>

This study has been made with the following social objectives of school English as set forth by Charles S. Pendleton in his "The Social Objectives of School English", in the foreground. He lists 1,581 objectives, but these are the aims or objectives of instruction in language and grammar that are more closely related to this study.

"1. The ability to spell correctly without hesitation all the ordinary words of one's writing vocabulary.

"3. The ability to write--in ordinary writing situations and without great concentration of attention--English which is grammatically correct.

"6. The ability to use intellectual economy in expression--few words, not many.

"7. The ability to capitalize speedily and accurately in one's writing.

"10. Command over an adequate writing vocabulary.

"21. The ability to punctuate accurately and speedily while writing.

"26. The attitude of expecting oneself without hesitation or doubt to write good English.

"39. The ability to write one's thoughts fluently in acceptable sentences.

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<sup>9</sup> Franklin Bobbitt, The Curriculum, (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1918), p. 247.

"108. The ability to distinguish instantly and accurately between past participles and past tenses in one's own use of language.

"181. The ability in writing, to use relational words--such as pronouns, conjunctions, and prepositions--so as to convey precisely the degree of meaning intended.

"193. The ability speedily and accurately to divide words occurring at the end of written lines.

"203. The ability to avoid dangling participles in one's use of language."<sup>10</sup>

The objectives of the training in the use of language according to Garbe are:

"1. To create a language consciousness.

"2. To give the pupils practice in expressing themselves in an accurate, forceful, interesting, clear, convincing manner.

"3. To improve the pupils' vocabularies and their choice of words.

"4. To develop a sentence sense and a sense of sentence relations.

"5. To eliminate the more elementary language errors, such as errors in capitalization, punctuation, and grammatical forms.

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<sup>10</sup> Charles S. Pendleton, Social Objectives of School English, (Publisher--Author), pp. 36-46.

"6. To develop a pride in the form of manuscripts and the general appearance of papers."<sup>11</sup>

Bobbitt says: "The individual is educated who can perform efficiently the labors of his calling; who can effectively cooperate with his fellows in social and civic affairs; who can keep his bodily powers at a high level of efficiency; who is prepared to participate in a proper range of desirable leisure occupations; who can carry on all his social relations with his fellow in an agreeable and effective manner.

"Education is consciously to prepare for these things."<sup>12</sup>

Drill and practice in and study of the language art will enable the person to carry on his social relations in an agreeable and effective way.

#### VII. OTHER STUDIES THAT HAVE SOME BEARING ON OR RELATION TO THIS STUDY

From an investigation made by Philip Harriman to locate the chief sources of confusion in the use of punctuation in the elementary and high school grades, he states that there

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C. H. Garbe, "Experiment in Correlating English Composition with the Content Subjects", Elementary School Journal, 31: 96-110.

12

Franklin Bobbitt, The Curriculum, (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1918), Chapter I, p. 3.

is a considerable amount of inconsistency in the types of errors made in these two phases of language mechanics.

"This fact of inconsistency," Mr. Harriman says, "is an important indicator of confusions and of tendency to make changes haphazardly."<sup>13</sup> The investigation reveals the need for a reorganization of the materials and method of English mechanics. In conferring with the persons used in this test, the investigator learned that they regarded the rules as "pedantic and artificial, confined to the class room practices of English teachers and to sections of textbooks which deal with such matters."<sup>14</sup> He suggests that the student formulate a "codification of punctuation and capitalization usages generally observed by all careful writers"<sup>15</sup> whose contributions appear in current newspapers and magazines.

A small study of the testing of punctuation principles by measuring reader speed and comprehension by Wilbur Hatfield<sup>16</sup> reveals a tendency away from the use of the

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<sup>13</sup> Philip Harriman, "Sources of Confusion in Punctuation and Capitalization Usages", Peabody Journal of Education, Volume 12, pp. 31-35.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., Vol. 12, pp. 31-35.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., Vol. 12, pp. 31-35.

<sup>16</sup> Wilbur Hatfield, "Objective Determination of Punctuation", Journal of Educational Research, Volume 26, pp. 569-571.

comma to set off initial dependent clauses except in long sentences.

Edith Shepherd<sup>17</sup> concludes from an experiment for the attitude of junior high school pupils toward English usage that favorable writing conditions must be "attained and maintained" in all classes in which pupils are asked to write. When this is done the English teacher will not labor in vain. Pupils should not be forced to scribble as fast as they can in order to finish the task and permitted to feel that the teacher is not particular about English. The English department is responsible for the teachings of instruction in punctuation, but it can never establish standards that will be respected if the science or history teachers do not demand careful writing.

Verna L. Newsome's outline of functional grammar is the following:

1. Recognition of a sentence as a whole
2. Parts of a sentence
  - a. Predicate verb
  - b. Simple subject
  - c. Predicate element; direct object; predicate noun, pronoun, or adjective.
  - d. Modifiers as a group; word, phrase, clause.

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<sup>17</sup> Edith Shepherd, "The Attitude of Junior High School Pupils Toward English Usage," School Review, Volume 34, pp. 574-586.

- e. Complete subject and complete predicate.
- 3. Relationship of the parts of a sentence
  - a. Independent clause--independent clause:  
use of coordinating conjunction
  - b. Verb--subject
  - c. Pronoun--antecedent
  - d. Modifier--word modified: use of coordinating conjunction or relative pronoun; use of preposition.<sup>18</sup>

Roy Ivan Johnson<sup>19</sup> made a comparative study of the written composition of the freshmen of the Kansas City high schools and those of the seniors at graduation, in order to determine the degree of elimination to be used on technical errors. He concludes:

(1) There is a lack of emphasis upon mechanics of English composition in the Kansas City high schools.

(2) There should be an order of needed increase in emphasis on the major classes of error.

(3) The study established a scientific basis for the direction of effort.

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<sup>18</sup> Verna L. Newsome, "Making English Grammar Function", English Journal, Volume 23, pp. 48-57.

<sup>19</sup> Roy Ivan Johnson, "The Persistency of Error in English Composition", School Review, Volume 25, pp. 550-580.

In an experiment in which the other teachers were asked to cooperate in a well-planned program of correct English usage, Pauline Cope<sup>20</sup> found that the student had a growing conviction that his basic English counted just as much in history or mathematics as in his regular English work.

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<sup>20</sup> Pauline Cope, "Developing a Usage Conscience through Cooperation", English Journal, Volume 22, pp. 399-405.

## CHAPTER II

### DESCRIPTION OF DATA SECURED

#### I. INTRODUCTION

The written expression in English and social science of forty-six juniors in Gerstmeyer Technical High School, Terre Haute, Indiana, was secured and checked for errors in English usage. There were fifty students in the class at the beginning of the term, but four withdrew. Each student submitted eighteen compositions, averaging one hundred fifty words in length, written during the forty minute periods. These two groups could be described as teacher-directed and self-directed. The experiment was conducted during the fall semester which was divided into three grading periods of six weeks each.

The errors in English usage made by the students on their papers determined the items which were placed in the tabulation. In tabulating the errors, it was necessary to decide upon some sort of classification. A temporary working list of errors was made but as new kinds of mistakes appeared in the papers, it was modified. These errors fell into six items--punctuation, grammar, spelling, sentence structure, diction, and mechanics. The writer used "The Century



Handbook of Writing"<sup>1</sup> as her authority. No doubtful errors were listed. The tables that follow form the basis for this comparative study.

## II. PUNCTUATION

Table I-A is the list of all errors made in punctuation in English and Table I-B is a tabulation of those made in social science in the same marks of punctuation.

According to totals for punctuation there is a difference of only 53 points more in the history than in the English and there is very little difference in the scores for the separate items under punctuation. However, the three punctuation usages in which mastery seems not to be very closely approached by the middle of the junior year are: comma and apostrophe in the teacher-instructed group, and end of sentence in the self-instructed.

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<sup>1</sup>Greever and Jones, Century Handbook of Writing, Revised Edition, (New York: The Century Company, 1922).

TABLE I-A

TYPES AND FREQUENCY OF ERRORS MADE IN PUNCTUATION  
BY FORTY-SIX STUDENTS IN WRITTEN COMPOSITION IN  
ENGLISH IN ONE SEMESTER (18 weeks)

Punctuation	First Six Weeks				Second Six Weeks				Third Six Weeks				Total
end of sentence	3	3	5	11	3	2	4	9	4	3	0	7	27
apostrophe	6	9	8	23	9	11	2	22	7	6	8	21	66
quotation	3	7	5	15	1	13	3	17	5	7	0	12	44
colon	3	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	6	1	1	8	12
semi-colon	4	2	8	14	2	2	0	4	0	0	0	0	18
comma	12	19	25	56	27	17	15	59	26	17	11	54	169
Total at end of term	31	40	52	123	42	45	24	111	48	34	20	102	336

Note: The above table is read thus: The number of errors made in punctuation in end of sentence is 3 for first measure, 3 for second measure, 5 for third measure, making a total of 11 for first six weeks; etc.; 27 is total for the semester in end of sentence punctuation.

TABLE I-B

TYPES AND FREQUENCY OF ERRORS MADE IN PUNCTUATION  
BY FORTY-~~SIX~~ STUDENTS IN WRITTEN EXPRESSION IN  
THE SOCIAL SCIENCES IN ONE SEMESTER (18 weeks)

Punctuation	First Six Weeks				Second Six Weeks				Third Six Weeks			Total	
end of sentence	20	10	13	43	8	9	11	28	6	8	10	24	95
apostrophe	4	7	6	17	8	10	7	25	4	10	5	19	61
quotation	6	11	7	24	6	6	10	22	6	1	2	9	55
colon	4	1	2	7	1	1	2	4	1	0	0	1	12
semi-colon	0	1	1	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
comma	18	10	16	44	18	20	12	50	24	18	27	69	163
	52	40	45	137	41	47	42	130	41	37	44	122	389

## III. GRAMMAR

Under the heading of grammar, Table II-A and -B, the increase of the points in the errors found in the history is very slight. There is a noticeable difference in the scores for adverb-adjective. In English composition, however, there is more need for the use of modifiers than there is in the other content subjects. The total 28 found in English as compared to 8 in the social science under the item, adjective-adverb, helps to verify this statement.

More stress needs to be placed on the mastery of case, especially on the possessive formed with the apostrophe. Students fail to distinguish between the possessive and plural forms. Thirty per cent of the errors made in grammar came under the item of case and about seventy per cent of these mistakes occurred in the formation of the possessive.

The figures, 61 in English and 61 in history, show little progress in the English class on the matter of agreement of verb and subject. The students' inability to distinguish the differences in the uses of the principal parts of the verb made the number of verb errors quite large.

TABLE II-A  
 TYPES AND FREQUENCY OF ERRORS MADE IN GRAMMAR BY  
 FORTY-SIX STUDENTS IN WRITTEN COMPOSITION IN  
ENGLISH IN ONE SEMESTER (18 weeks)

Grammar	First Six Weeks				Second Six Weeks				Third Six Weeks				Total
case	8	9	16	33	7	20	6	33	12	9	7	28	94
number	0	2	4	6	2	2	1	5	2	1	2	5	16
agreement	8	6	5	19	3	7	7	17	5	9	11	25	61
principal parts	5	5	12	22	10	4	5	19	14	4	2	20	61
tense	1	0	6	7	2	5	5	12	13	6	2	21	40
mode	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	2	1	1	1	3	6
auxiliary	2	9	0	11	1	2	1	4	2	2	3	7	22
adverb-adjective	0	4	5	9	5	3	1	9	3	2	5	10	28
Total	25	35	48	108	30	43	28	101	52	34	133	119	328

TABLE II-B  
TYPES AND FREQUENCY OF ERRORS MADE IN GRAMMAR BY  
FORTY-SIX STUDENTS IN WRITTEN EXPRESSION IN THE  
SOCIAL SCIENCES IN ONE SEMESTER (18 weeks)

Grammar	First Six Weeks				Second Six Weeks				Third Six Weeks			Total	
case	6	14	10	30	20	17	9	46	9	13	16	38	114
number	1	2	4	7	4	2	7	13	8	2	1	11	31
agreement	9	7	8	24	8	9	7	24	7	3	3	13	61
principal parts	12	3	5	20	8	3	7	18	9	12	11	32	70
tense	8	5	8	21	5	5	2	12	7	3	4	14	47
mode	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
auxiliary	0	1	0	1	5	1	0	6	0	5	1	6	13
adverb-adjective	1	0	1	2	1	0	3	4	1	1	0	2	8
Total	37	32	36	105	51	37	35	123	41	39	36	116	344

## IV. SPELLING

Table III-A and -B shows the scores made in spelling. The totals placed it second in English and third in the social science. This consistently seemed to be due to the students' poor pronunciation and inability to identify parts of speech. The greater number of errors in spelling in the history shows less consciousness on the part of the student in this subject when self-directed. The point in spelling, "Dropping the final consonant or last letter" stood out so much that the writer inserted it as an item. It is not listed in the "Century Handbook of Writing."<sup>2</sup> This item, 236, alone constitutes almost a fourth of 987, the total for spelling.

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<sup>2</sup>Greever and Jones, Op. cit.

TABLE III-A

TYPES AND FREQUENCY OF ERRORS MADE IN SPELLING BY  
 FORTY-SIX STUDENTS IN WRITTEN COMPOSITION IN  
ENGLISH IN ONE SEMESTER (18 weeks)

Spelling	First Six Weeks					Second Six Weeks				Third Six Weeks			Total	
ie - ei	3	2	0	5	0	2	3	5	2	0	1	3	13	
doubling of final consonant	3	2	3	8	3	4	2	9	3	1	0	4	21	
dropping of final consonant	5	19	22	46	15	7	5	27	9	5	7	21	94	
compounds	2	0	1	3	1	0	1	2	1	1	0	2	7	
plurals	6	4	1	11	3	0	2	5	4	0	1	5	21	
other words misspelled	32	37	36	105	35	32	33	100	31	21	15	67	272	
Total	51	64	63	178	57	45	46	148	50	28	24	102	428	



TABLE III-B

TYPES AND FREQUENCY OF ERRORS MADE IN SPELLING BY  
 FORTY-SIX STUDENTS IN WRITTEN EXPRESSION IN THE  
SOCIAL SCIENCES IN ONE SEMESTER (18 weeks)

Spelling	First Six Weeks				Second Six Weeks				Third Six Weeks			Total	
ie - ei	1	0	1	2	1	4	2	7	0	2	1	3	12
doubling of final consonant	3	4	3	10	3	7	0	10	1	1	3	5	25
dropping of final consonant	23	17	17	57	11	16	13	40	20	12	13	45	142
compounds	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
plurals	2	3	13	18	8	2	8	18	3	2	3	8	44
other words misspelled	42	41	48	131	44	29	31	104	42	36	23	101	336
Total	71	65	82	218	67	58	54	179	66	53	43	162	559

## V. DICTION

In diction, as indicated by Table IV-A and -B, there is a difference of ninety-three in the totals, 201 in English and 108 in history. This can be explained by the fact that the terms in the latter subject are seen and studied in a text while those used in English composition must be created by the students themselves.

TABLE IV-A

TYPES AND FREQUENCY OF ERRORS MADE IN DICTION BY  
 FORTY-SIX STUDENTS IN WRITTEN COMPOSITION IN  
ENGLISH IN ONE SEMESTER (18 weeks)

Diction	First Six Weeks				Second Six Weeks				Third Six Weeks				Total
wordiness	3	1	10	14	8	5	4	17	7	6	1	14	45
exact word	22	12	18	52	16	18	26	60	21	11	12	44	156
Total	25	13	28	66	24	23	30	77	28	17	13	58	201

TABLE IV-B

TYPES AND FREQUENCY OF ERRORS MADE IN DICTION BY  
 FORTY-SIX STUDENTS IN WRITTEN EXPRESSION IN THE  
SOCIAL SCIENCES IN ONE SEMESTER (18 weeks)

Diction	First Six Weeks				Second Six Weeks				Third Six Weeks				Total
wordiness	2	2	3	7	1	2	0	3	1	4	2	7	17
exact word	13	10	13	36	7	7	4	18	12	13	12	37	91
Total	15	12	16	43	8	9	4	21	13	17	14	44	108

## VI. SENTENCE STRUCTURE

The mistakes in sentence structure, as shown in Table V-A and -B, for both English and history, constitute the greatest number of all errors made. The totals, 860 in English and 1,113 in history, present 253 more errors in sentence structure made in the social science work than in the English work. Much of the faulty sentence structure lay in the omission of necessary words to complete a construction which had been begun, and the omission of verbs. The mistakes tabulated as faulty references were compiled from the unnecessary use of the indefinite it, you, and they; the use of the pronoun to refer broadly to a general idea; and the divided and weak references.

The lack of unity of thought was due to the excessive coordination and the comma splice or blunder. Clearness of thought was also defeated by the shift of tense. The difference of 83 more in the English than in the history on this point of shift of tense was due to the use of the vivid present tense.

TABLE V-A

TYPES AND FREQUENCY OF ERRORS MADE IN SENTENCE STRUCTURE  
 BY FORTY-SIX STUDENTS IN WRITTEN COMPOSITION IN  
ENGLISH IN ONE SEMESTER (18 weeks)

Sentence Structure		First Six Weeks				Second Six Weeks				Third Six Weeks			Total
split construction	1	0	1	2	2	0	0	2	1	1	1	3	7
general incoherence	22	27	11	60	19	11	23	53	25	13	18	56	169
incomplete construction	17	10	18	45	13	9	9	31	10	4	8	22	98
faulty reference	9	15	11	35	11	8	12	31	21	16	28	65	131
fragment	2	3	3	8	2	3	3	8	10	2	4	16	32
misplaced word	6	3	9	18	4	9	2	15	2	8	4	14	47
is where - is when	2	0	1	3	2	2	1	5	2	3	2	7	15
comma splice	11	13	27	51	14	12	11	37	11	5	9	25	113
excess coordination	9	3	11	23	11	7	8	26	14	3	13	30	79

TABLE V-A (Continued)

TYPES AND FREQUENCY OF ERRORS MADE IN SENTENCE STRUCTURE  
 BY FORTY-SIX STUDENTS IN WRITTEN COMPOSITION IN  
ENGLISH IN ONE SEMESTER (18 weeks)

Sentence Structure	First Six Weeks					Second Six Weeks			Third Six Weeks			Total	
cause or reason	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	5	1	0	0	1	6
dangling participle	0	3	2	5	3	1	2	6	2	0	2	4	15
shift in voice	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
shift in subject	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
shift in person	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	2
shift in number	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
shift in tense	16	6	4	26	6	14	8	28	28	10	7	45	99
subordination	9	3	7	19	7	6	4	17	4	1	6	11	47
Total	104	86	105	295	94	83	89	266	131	66	102	299	860

TABLE V-B

TYPES AND FREQUENCY OF ERRORS MADE IN SENTENCE STRUCTURE BY  
 FORTY-SIX STUDENTS IN WRITTEN EXPRESSION IN THE SOCIAL  
SCIENCES IN ONE SEMESTER (18 weeks)

Sentence Structure	First Six Weeks				Second Six Weeks				Third Six Weeks			Total	
split construction	3	1	1	5	0	4	5	9	1	1	0	2	16
general incoherence	9	16	9	34	8	6	10	24	12	11	13	36	94
incomplete con- struction	53	46	52	151	37	32	33	102	27	22	27	76	329
faulty reference	21	18	14	53	17	29	13	59	10	21	14	45	157
fragment	7	5	6	18	13	4	4	21	5	4	5	14	53
misplaced word	18	14	11	43	7	16	10	33	13	24	26	63	139
is where - is when	11	4	5	20	5	9	5	19	1	8	6	15	54
comma splice	16	8	6	30	5	11	7	23	12	8	11	31	84
excess coordination	12	5	19	36	12	6	12	30	7	11	5	23	89



TABLE V-B (Continued)

TYPES AND FREQUENCY OF ERRORS MADE IN SENTENCE STRUCTURE  
 BY FORTY-SIX STUDENTS IN WRITTEN EXPRESSION IN THE  
SOCIAL SCIENCES IN ONE SEMESTER (18 weeks)

Sentence Structure	First Six Weeks				Second Six Weeks				Third Six Weeks			Total	
cause or reason	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	3
dangling participle	5	4	1	10	5	4	1	10	3	1	0	4	24
shift in voice	1	0	0	1	3	2	1	6	0	0	0	0	7
shift in subject	0	1	2	3	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	2	6
shift in person	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
shift in number	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	7	7	9
shift in tense	4	0	0	4	0	0	4	4	0	4	2	6	14
subordination	1	4	6	11	5	3	7	15	2	3	4	9	35
Total	162	128	132	422	119	126	112	357	94	118	122	334	1113

## VII. MECHANICS

Again, the total scores, Table VI-A and -B, in the totals of the mechanics of writing, the history work shows more carelessness than does the English work. Mistakes in capitalization came primarily from the too frequent use of the capital letter both in English and history. The difference of 66 more in the scores in English than in history in paragraphing may be accounted for by the fact that the paragraphs in history were indicated by the questions.

TABLE VI-A

TYPES AND FREQUENCY OF ERRORS MADE IN MECHANICS BY  
 FORTY-SIX STUDENTS IN WRITTEN COMPOSITION IN  
ENGLISH IN ONE semester (18 weeks)

Mechanics	First Six Weeks				Second Six Weeks				Third Six Weeks				Total
capitals	14	14	9	37	28	5	5	38	13	7	6	26	101
abbreviations	0	0	3	3	0	1	0	1	3	0	0	3	7
syllabication	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3	4
paragraphing	8	16	3	27	10	13	4	27	23	6	4	33	87
Total	22	31	15	68	38	19	9	66	39	16	10	65	199

TABLE VI-B

TYPES AND FREQUENCY OF ERRORS MADE IN MECHANICS BY  
 FORTY-SIX STUDENTS IN WRITTEN EXPRESSION IN THE  
SOCIAL SCIENCES IN ONE SEMESTER (18 weeks)

Mechanics	First Six Weeks				Second Six Weeks				Third Six Weeks				Total
capitals	29	34	18	81	23	36	20	79	22	25	21	68	228
abbreviations	3	0	0	3	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	5
syllabication	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
paragraphing	2	0	2	4	5	3	3	11	1	4	1	6	21
Total	34	34	20	88	29	40	23	92	23	30	22	75	255

## VIII. IMPROVEMENT BETWEEN TWO MEASURING PERIODS

Table VII shows there was improvement made between the first six weeks and the last six weeks in all phases except grammar in both English and history, and sentence structure in English. In this case the loss in number of errors meant gain in training. The English shows an .11 loss and the history a .15 loss in total errors.

TABLE VII  
PER CENT OF GAIN OR LOSS IN ERRORS  
TO INDICATE IMPROVEMENT BETWEEN  
FIRST AND LAST SIX WEEKS

	English			History		
	First Six Weeks	Third Six Weeks	Per cent of Gain or Loss in Errors	First Six Weeks	Third Six Weeks	Per cent of Gain or Loss in Errors
Punctuation	123	102	.17+ loss	137	122	.11- loss
Grammar	108	119	.101 gain	105	116	.104 gain
Spelling	178	102	.427 loss	218	162	.256 loss
Diction	66	58	.121 loss	43	44	.023 loss
Sentence Structure	295	299	.014- gain	422	334	.208 loss
Mechanics	68	65	.044 loss	88	75	.147 loss
Total	838	745	.11 loss	1,013	853	.15 loss

## IX. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NUMBER OF ERRORS

Table VIII, the tabulation of the total scores, indicates comparatively little transfer because in all phases except diction the history papers contained the greater number of mistakes.

TABLE VIII  
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NUMBER OF  
ERRORS MADE IN ENGLISH AND  
HISTORY IN ONE SEMESTER

	English	History	Difference Be- tween Number of Errors
Punctuation	336	726	389
Grammar	323	344	21
Spelling	428	559	131
Diction	201	108	93
Sentence Structure	860	1,113	253
Mechanics	199	255	56
Total	2,352	2,768	416



## X. PARALLEL IN TOTAL SCORES

When the total scores are placed in descending order, Table IX, they reveal an almost exact parallel in the six phases of English usage in these two content subjects. Sentence structure in each subject stands first; spelling, second in English, and third in history; punctuation, third in English but second in history; the grammar is parallel; diction appears last in the history column but opposite mechanics on the English side.

TABLE IX  
 TOTAL NUMBER OF ERRORS IN  
 EACH OF THE SIX PHASES  
 OF ENGLISH USAGE IN  
 DESCENDING ORDER

English	Number of Errors	History	Number of Errors
Sentence Structure	860	Sentence Structure	1,113
Spelling	428	Spelling	559
Punctuation	336	Punctuation	725
Grammar	323	Grammar	344
Diction	201	Diction	108
Mechanics	199	Mechanics	255
Total	2,352	Total	2,768

## XI. CHANCES FOR SIMILARITY IN SIMILAR EXPERIMENTS

The difference in the means, 50 and 59.4, Table X, indicates that there are 99 chances out of 100 of a true difference; that is, this group shows a tendency to make more English errors in social studies than in English composition.

## XII. CORRELATION

When the rank of the scores made in history were compared with those made in English, the rank orders were somewhat similar. According to the Spearman formula, the correlation was .51.

TABLE X

DISTRIBUTION OF TOTAL ERRORS IN  
ENGLISH AND SOCIAL STUDIES  
IN ONE SEMESTER

English		Social Studies	
Interval	f	Interval	f
100-120	1	120-130	1
90 -99	1	100-119	1
80- 89	1	90- 99	2
70- 79	5	80- 89	4
60- 69	5	70- 79	7
50- 59	6	60- 69	7
40- 49	17	50- 59	9
30- 39	6	40- 49	9
20- 29	1	30- 39	2
10- 19	3	20- 29	4
		10- 19	0
<u>Total</u>	46		46
<u>Mean</u>	50		59.4
<u>Median</u>	48		59
<u>S. D.</u>	19		21.3
Difference in means			
in favor of			9.4
Chances in 100			
of a true difference			99

and mean, 19, 21.3, 9.4, 99

### CHAPTER III

#### CONCLUSION

It may be said that not enough material has been used as the basis of this survey to determine accurately the kinds and amount of errors found in the written work of the pupils. It was found that the number and kind of errors committed by the pupils in the exercises described did not vary greatly. There were few cases in the final scores in which the per cent of loss or gain in number of errors was very noticeable. This is sufficient to confirm the fitness of the material.

Of course, a comparison in the amounts of the errors and of the improvement made does not tell the whole truth, because in the course of the term the student may have developed in his ways of expression and thus have increased the possibility of certain errors. He had varied his sentences, replacing simple with complex, or correcting excess coordination with subordination. But the results secured are sufficiently detailed for the purposes of this study.

According to this investigation there is great need for much stress in instruction and practice in the writing of sentences that are clear in meaning, generally coherent, and complete in construction. Much of the faulty construction

was due to very necessary words being omitted. This was very true in the case of the verb. This evidence leads the writer to conclude that some method of developing better sentence structure should be used, and the approach should be made with the idea of the synthesis of thought into sentences rather than to the analysis of the parts of speech, etc., in a given sentence. The inability to distinguish between the principal parts of a verb would call for much drill in this phase of grammar.

More emphasis might be placed on oral reading in an effort to have better articulation which no doubt would make for correct spelling.

The findings of the study reveal a considerable amount of sameness in the kinds of errors in English usage in these two subjects. And, too, there is not sufficient evidence of transfer of learning, which fact could no doubt be attributed to carelessness and lack of consciousness on the part of the student in the expression of his thoughts in clear, correct form at any time. The student should be made to feel a certain pride in the use of his mother tongue.

Whether this study of the errors in English usage of forty-six pupils indicates insufficient training, improper training, lack of native ability, or some other deficiency, the writer believes that much efficiency in this phase of

education could be accomplished if every teacher would assist in helping the student to be conscious of good English usage and to form better English habits. A deep respect for this common means of communication should be held by every individual and especially by every teacher. Many students say, "She's or he's not particular about our English," and until they believe and know that "she is particular", similar studies will reveal comparatively the same results.

However, since the English teacher is responsible for instruction in English, the following table, according to this experiment, should be taken into consideration.

Order of increase in emphasis on the classes of error:

1. Incomplete construction of thoughts into clear sentences.
2. Mistakes in punctuation.
  - a. Comma
  - b. Apostrophe
3. Mistakes in spelling.
  - a. Words that sound alike but are spelled differently.
  - b. Dropping of final letter.
4. Mistakes in cases--especially the possessive.
5. Mistakes in principal part of verbs.

#### 6. Mistakes in paragraphing.

Another similar study conducted in the same manner but in another school or even in the same school would be very helpful in conserving of time and the placing of emphasis. Other of the content subjects than history should be used in other investigations.

Respect for grammar outside the English composition class, pride in clearness of expression of thought at any time, desire to permit a transfer of training in written expression should and could be consciously directed at first but unconsciously fostered later by a consistent effort on the part of all teachers to do so. The writer with the cooperation of the teachers of social science collected all essay-type test papers of her composition students in another school than the one used in this study to supplement this study. However, in this work the students were told of the collection of their history papers by their English teacher. The result was that they soon began to question their history teachers about improvement and the use to be made of the improvement. If this little plan made these students conscious of a checking, a more determined effort on the part of all instructors would soon result in better English usage.

Clarence D. Thorpe says, "A distinct step toward economy will be taken when all courses where there is



writing to be done become classes in composition."<sup>1</sup> When this is done the great principle of education--growth or development--will be accomplished.

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<sup>1</sup> Clarence D. Thorpe, "Economy in Teaching Composition," English Journal, High School Edition, Volume 20, 1931, p. 282.

## APPENDIX

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NUMBER OF ERRORS MADE IN EACH OF THE SIX PHASES  
OF ENGLISH USAGE BY INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS

English							History						
Punctuation	Grammar	Spelling	Diction	Sentence Structure	Mechanics	Total	Punctuation	Grammar	Spelling	Diction	Sentence Structure	Mechanics	Total
18	8	3	11	19	5	64	14	2	8	3	25	0	52
5	4	3	3	28	1	44	20	6	2	2	20	3	53
10	6	7	5	21	0	49	10	13	5	2	30	4	64
5	0	6	0	2	11	24	5	2	6	0	5	3	21
3	11	10	4	17	2	47	12	5	15	2	30	8	72
2	12	10	11	20	2	57	2	12	30	4	31	1	80
6	3	11	5	7	10	42	6	2	4	0	20	3	35
10	16	8	8	16	13	71	6	4	3	4	18	5	90
2	0	2	4	3	0	11	5	1	8	0	2	4	20
7	5	14	9	26	10	71	3	17	18	1	15	4	58
6	5	10	3	21	1	46	10	8	4	1	26	7	56
10	16	14	16	26	13	95	13	7	23	3	22	7	75
9	13	29	9	53	3	116	17	12	31	4	45	13	122
12	5	10	5	25	2	59	7	8	20	3	26	9	73
10	2	8	4	14	8	46	4	4	8	8	34	25	83

NUMBER OF ERRORS MADE IN EACH OF THE SIX PHASES  
OF ENGLISH USAGE BY INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS

English							History						
Punctuation	Grammar	Spelling	Diction	Sentence Structure	Mechanics	Total	Punctuation	Grammar	Spelling	Diction	Sentence Structure	Mechanics	Total
9	6	17	7	10	12	61	9	9	20	1	14	0	53
3	5	5	6	19	3	41	3	7	8	1	21	8	48
2	4	7	6	14	1	34	3	4	9	0	24	1	41
4	2	14	8	12	3	43	10	8	14	5	24	4	65
5	10	25	1	22	0	63	2	13	24	8	28	8	83
8	8	21	5	27	6	75	8	12	24	6	41	2	93
4	3	15	4	29	4	59	19	4	36	7	20	6	92
2	8	10	2	22	0	44	5	6	9	2	40	6	68
7	12	3	3	13	0	38	5	1	5	3	32	1	47
9	7	1	7	12	5	41	12	4	1	1	15	6	39
4	8	14	1	24	5	56	11	7	2	0	30	4	54
10	12	8	3	22	2	57	8	8	1	0	29	3	49
7	2	5	2	14	1	31	7	7	0	1	25	11	51
5	10	9	6	13	3	46	5	5	8	2	29	16	65
1	15	5	3	22	8	54	11	15	0	2	22	0	50
8	16	15	5	16	6	66	7	10	19	1	21	5	63
15	14	10	3	32	11	85	7	10	10	0	37	7	71

NUMBER OF ERRORS MADE IN EACH OF THE SIX PHASES  
OF ENGLISH USAGE BY INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS

English							History						
Punctuation	Grammar	Spelling	Diction	Sentence Structure	Mechanics	Total	Punctuation	Grammar	Spelling	Diction	Sentence Structure	Mechanics	Total
0	1	4	0	6	4	15	1	12	3	3	5	3	27
6	4	3	2	16	6	37	15	8	10	0	25	13	71
10	5	8	3	12	2	40	9	12	15	2	30	8	76
18	3	5	3	10	3	42	12	8	15	1	30	3	69
7	3	2	2	16	1	31	7	9	19	3	14	2	59
15	14	8	1	26	12	76	4	7	23	4	28	5	71
10	11	9	3	4	2	39	11	8	42	1	35	13	110
2	1	7	0	6	0	16	3	5	11	2	24	0	45
17	5	9	2	30	4	67	30	14	10	3	15	11	80
7	4	5	6	21	0	43	5	4	5	2	8	1	25
4	7	9	2	19	2	43	7	6	8	6	20	2	49
8	6	8	1	20	2	45	6	7	10	4	29	5	61
9	7	6	3	20	4	49	10	6	6	0	21	3	46
5	9	16	4	33	6	73	3	5	9	0	28	3	48
336	323	428	201	860	199	2352	725	344	559	108	1113	255	2768

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