

TEACHER'S GUIDE TO
PATTERNS
OF
ENGLISH

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The Linguistic Approach

INTRODUCTION

I propose in this guide to give some suggestions about the use of *Patterns of English*, but first a few general remarks seem in order.

This book is an attempt to work out a method of teaching the English language according to the principles of linguistic science. So far as I know, it is the first serious effort to provide such a method at the secondary level. But I should like to stress the fact that the only new thing in the book is the manner of presentation of the material. The material itself — the view of language here presented — is the product of many decades of research and study by hundreds of scholars, of whom perhaps the best known is the late Leonard Bloomfield of Yale University. The English language in particular has been the subject of two important books published in the 1950's: *The Structure of English* by Charles Carpenter Fries of the University of Michigan and *An Outline of English Structure* by George Trager and Henry Lee Smith of the Department of State in Washington, D.C. I have drawn on these two books especially and on the works of linguistic science generally for the facts of the English language. If I have distorted the principles of linguistic science, I have done so through ignorance and lack of understanding, not intentionally. It seems to me that where all the experts agree, one has no recourse but to agree with the experts.

I may say that I have come to this view of the English language slowly and with considerable reluctance. My own training was entirely traditional — in high school, in college, and through graduate school. When I began to teach English, I taught it traditionally. When I began to write books, they were traditional books. If I have turned entirely away from the tradition, it is not without having known it thoroughly.

I have no intention here of attacking or ridiculing the older ways of presenting the English language in the schools. The tradition contains much that is true and much that is valuable. Teachers working

with it have often achieved very good results. Certainly no one need apologize for using the only materials available.

The development of the science of language, however — and particularly its rapid progress during and since World War II — has made a difference. The writings of the linguistic scientists have rather thoroughly demolished the foundation on which the tradition has rested these last two hundred years. Fundamental tenets which only yesterday seemed unassailable are today not seriously defended by anybody. The textbooks continue to present a quasi-logical view of the structure of the language, but I don't know of any serious student of language — anyone who makes the study of language his business — who would uphold this view.

This puts the teacher of English in a very difficult position, or so it has seemed to me. When I came in touch with linguistic science, I reacted against it and wished to defend the tradition. But when I tried to, I found the tradition largely indefensible. I found myself giving ground, grudgingly but steadily, until I was forced to the realization that the picture of the language I was giving my students was false — not false in all its details, but false as a whole, falsely grounded. I had then some painful questions to answer. Can a wrong description of the language lead a student to improvement in the use of the language? Can anything justify a teacher's giving to his students, day after day, what he knows to be misinformation?

In the book mentioned above, Professor Fries draws an analogy with Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood. Harvey made his great discovery in 1616. As soon as it was known that the blood circulated, it was, or should have been, obvious that bloodletting was useless. Yet nearly two hundred years later George Washington was bled to death by physicians attending him. This, Fries remarks, illustrates how slowly ideas work against strongly entrenched traditions.

It illustrates also the present difficulty of the teacher of English. Consider the doctor of the post-Harvey period. He knew that the blood circulated. He knew that bloodletting was useless. But knowing this didn't help him cure the patient. If you didn't let blood, what did you do? Just watch the patient expire? And of course the patient wanted you to bleed him. The patient knew very well that good doctors always bled their patients.

Linguistic science has done to the teachers of English pretty much what Harvey's discovery did to the doctors. The linguists have been very eager to tell us that what we have been doing in our English classes is superstitious and useless. But having made this point, they have gone away and left us wandering between two worlds: the old procedures destroyed and the new not yet born. In this dilemma many English teachers have turned away from language teaching altogether. In the last few decades it has at times been popular to say that it's not the form but the idea that counts, what the student says, not how he says it.

For myself, this has not been a very good solution. I am well aware that many students are capable of learning to write without any special instruction in language. If they are voracious readers, they learn to write much as they learn to speak — by observation and imitation. But we all know that many of our students are not voracious readers. Many of them need a great deal of directed practice, a great deal of explanation and correction, before they can express themselves clearly on paper. If this were not so, it would be hard to justify the existence of English classes at all, at least for native speakers of English.

But once we decide to direct, explain, and correct, we are committed to some kind of study of the structure of the language, for it is precisely in the structure of the language that the student goes astray. Does he write run-on sentences and fragments? Does he misplace his modifiers? Does he fail to punctuate appositives? Then how can he be taught to improve if the teacher is unable to talk to him about sentences, modifiers, and appositives?

I am forced to agree with the linguists that we have in the past approached sentence structure in the wrong way. It is demonstrable that our definitions of *sentence* and such concepts didn't really define anything, except for those who understood the concepts to begin with and were not in need of the definition. But this is not to say that sentence structure should not be studied in the schools at all. Manifestly it must be studied if the student is to be taught to write sentences.

It is my hope that *Patterns of English* will provide for teacher and student a way of talking about the components of sentences. The book does not dwell on sentence errors as such. It is, or tries to be, purely descriptive, and descriptive of good writing rather than poor writing.

But I believe that this description will provide the tools for coping with such errors as arise with individual students or individual classes. It will provide a means of communicating with the student about sentences, good or bad, and I would list this as one of the reasons for studying the book.

But another and more important reason is this: to develop a feeling for the structure of language. Our language — any language — is a thing of staggering complexity. But it does have structure. It does have form and pattern. If it didn't, we couldn't possibly carry on the vast and complicated communication that we do. It seems to me that the young writer needs to have this structure brought to his attention. As a speaker of the language, he grasps it fully on the subconscious level. But in order to develop his writing he needs to experience it consciously. He needs to develop a feel for sentences, and this he can do by studying how, through modification and combination, they build from a very few basic patterns to unlimited variety. I have tried here to provide not only an explanation of this process but also, in the exercises, opportunity for conscious sentence building.

Finally, and I think most important of all, the study of the structure of one's native language is or should be a central part of the education of any boy or girl — for its own sake. Certainly the study of the English language has not in the past been very popular, except perhaps in its historical aspects. But there are reasons for this: the study has never had an intellectually sound basis, and it has almost never been approached as an object of interest. But it *is* an object of interest if there is any interest in human beings. The language is the core of our minds. Someone has said that we begin by speaking as we think and end by thinking as we speak. The best way to understand how our minds work is to study our language. Perhaps it is the only way.

THE PROBLEM OF TERMINOLOGY

One of the most serious difficulties in this presentation has been that of deciding what terms to use for the various word classes and other categories. It has been pointed out many times that the Latin terminology of traditional grammar is cumbersome and often misleading. A good example is the term *subject*. When we ask "What is the subject

of that sentence?" we may mean either of two things: (1) What noun in it agrees with the verb, or (2) what in general is the sentence about? Such other terms as *noun*, *adjective*, *indirect object* suggest in their etymologies a kind of language analysis which has now been shown to be fruitless. For this reason many linguistic scientists have tried to get away from the traditional terms altogether. They either have coined new terms of their own or have used letters and numbers to designate the different classes.

I quite sympathize with this practice and see the necessity for it in scientific work, but I have not thought it wise to follow it in this textbook. The old terms, like *noun* and *verb*, are deeply embedded in our language, and it seems best to use them whenever we can. Furthermore, few students will come to this book without some previous instruction in traditional grammar. They will have some acquaintance with the common terms of grammar, and the sight of them here should make this new approach somewhat less formidable in appearance.

I have therefore tried to use common terms wherever I can. The four form classes have been assigned familiar names — *noun*, *verb*, *adjective*, *adverb*. Some of the structure groups have been more or less identified in the tradition; where they have, I have used the common names — *conjunction*, *preposition*, *auxiliary*. Where they have not been traditionally identified, I have assigned them the best term I could find — like *determiner* or *intensifier*. I have found it necessary to avoid terms which suggest that words belong to two classes simultaneously; thus in place of *conjunctive adverb* or *adverbial conjunction* I have used *sentence connector* for words of the *therefore* group.

Some of the matters introduced here are not found in traditional grammar at all but only in the works of linguistic science. For these I have simply used the scientific terms — *phoneme*, *juncture*, *pitch*, etc. I have departed from this only where I thought the student might find the scientific term hard to pronounce; thus in place of *immediate constituents*, which is the term in general use among linguists, I have substituted *pattern parts*.

I must here call attention to one very serious danger which the use of familiar terms brings with it. On seeing the old term, the student (and perhaps the teacher too) will tend to assume that it has just the

old meaning. One must guard against this. Let the book define the terms. For example, whatever *noun*, *verb*, *adjective*, *adverb* mean in traditional grammar, here they mean only what they are said to mean in Chapters 3 and 4 and no more than that. Don't let the student jump to conclusions.

Experience shows that this is not a very serious matter for nouns and verbs. *Noun* means here practically what it means in the tradition. *Verb* includes what are traditionally called *participles* and *gerunds* and *infinitives* and excludes *auxiliaries*, but these differences don't seem to give much trouble. But *adjective* is another matter. In this book *adjective* does *not* mean "anything that modifies a noun." I should like to print that sentence in letters an inch high, because the teacher will be in lots of trouble if it isn't noticed. When we want a term for anything that modifies a noun, as we sometimes do, we use the term *noun modifier*. When we say "adjective," we mean a word of the type *beautiful*, *honest*, *unusual*, as explained in Chapter 4 and elsewhere.

I make a big point of this because the teacher will almost inevitably feel that it is easier to define adjective in the old way and will perhaps be sorely tempted to alter the presentation here. But this temptation should be resisted. Actually the definition of *adjective* is one of the major weaknesses of the traditional approach. If you try to set up a word class which includes everything that modifies a noun, you get a hodge-podge — many entirely dissimilar things thrown together. And you have then no way of working through to the basic structure of the language.

Adverbs are a difficulty, but not a special one for this book. Traditional books by no means agree on what adverbs are, and the student may or may not have learned to use the term as it is used here. Again, the safe procedure is to let the book define the term. Notice that words of the *very* type are not here called adverbs. These comprise a special structure group, called *intensifiers*, which are somewhat different in their patterning from adverbs. This is a small point, however, and may be passed over lightly if the teacher wishes.

The structure groups give some trouble so far as terminology is concerned. Words of the group called *determiners* regularly modify nouns and so are lumped with adjectives in the traditional presentation. But they pattern quite differently from words of the *beautiful*, *honest*, *sincere*

type, and because of the important role they play in our sentence patterns they must be kept separate.

One difficulty with determiners is that many of the items which occur as determiners occur also as pronouns. This interchange is fully explained in Chapters 7 and 8, but it must be dwelt on if the student is to understand the categories. There are several special formal relationships between determiners and pronouns. For instance, the words *my* and *mine*, which are clearly related, occur, in Modern English, in different classes: *my* is always a determiner and *mine* is always a pronoun. If the emphasis were on forms, these would be studied together. Where the emphasis is on sentence patterns, however, as it is here, they must be kept apart.

The terminology of the other groups presents fewer difficulties. You will notice that the book does not call *may* in "He may go" an *auxiliary verb*; it calls it simply an *auxiliary*, reserving the term *verb* for the form class. Many students, however, will call it an auxiliary verb, and this is not worth fussing about if they know the difference in the patterning. Notice that *conjunction* here means just words of the *and* type; in the tradition it often means words of the *because* type also. For the latter I have used the term *subordinator*. I have also included among *subordinators* what are sometimes called *definite relative pronouns* and *indefinite relative pronouns*. These could easily be distinguished from the *because* group, but for the purposes of this book the distinction is not necessary.

Other familiar terms used here are *subject*, *object*, *complement*, *indirect object*, *object complement*. These mean here about what they mean traditionally. The difference is that they are traditionally defined on the basis of meaning, whereas here they are identified by structural signals in the contrasting sentence patterns. As a generic term for these concepts I have used the expression *function unit*.

CONFLICT WITH OTHER GRAMMATICAL TRAINING

Closely linked to the matter of terminology is a question that invariably arises when language study of this sort is proposed: What about the student who comes to this study from a traditional class? Or who goes from it into a traditional class? Will he not be completely confused? The answer to this is simple. No.

This is really a ghost problem, and I should like to lay the ghost if I can. There is nothing in this presentation which will keep a student from understanding traditional grammar *insofar as traditional grammar can be understood at all*. To the extent to which traditional grammar deals with realities — and it does deal with them to a considerable extent — this book will help the student to understand traditional grammar. What we try to do here is to ignore the philosophical verbiage in which language study has been obscured and to focus attention on the tangible signals by which the language operates. This focus has as its sole purpose the sharpening of the student's perception of word classes, word functions, kinds of sentences — matters with which the tradition also deals.

It is true of course that the tradition sometimes deals with matters that are unreal or inconsequential. This book will not help the student here. It won't hinder him either, however, and if it is his fate to go on and memorize such definitions as "an interrogative sentence is a sentence that asks a question," there is nothing in his way.

The problem of transition between this and traditional grammar learning is for the student largely one of terminology, and this will prove a minor matter once the concepts to which the terms apply are understood. Once the student has a clear idea of the patterning of words of the type *because*, he can easily call them *subordinators* or *subordinating conjunctions* or *clausal adverbs* or whatever his current teacher wishes to call them. The principal thing is to identify the class; the assignment of a term is secondary.

One must remember also that when one speaks of "traditional grammar" one is not speaking of anything homogeneous so far as terminology is concerned. The terminology of traditional grammar is notoriously chaotic, varying violently from book to book. Consider how many terms there are for words of the *therefore* group. They are variously called *introductory adverbs*, *conjunctive adverbs*, *adverbial conjunctions*, *coordinating conjunctions*, *illative conjunctions*, and *subordinating conjunctions*. In terminology, *Patterns of English* conflicts with traditional books scarcely more than traditional books conflict with one another.

There is only one "transition trouble" that seems to me likely to arise from the use of this book. That is that the student will develop a scorn for the older ways of teaching the English language and will

undertake to correct and instruct his next year's teacher. This could admittedly have an unfortunate effect on school morale and should be guarded against. I have tried very hard in the text to avoid polemics. Indeed, I have tried to avoid all reference to traditional teaching, and I believe that in most circumstances the teacher will be well advised to do likewise. The student needn't be informed that there is anything especially revolutionary about this approach. He can be told simply that this is another way of looking at the language, an interesting way, and a way which may help him with some of the matters that have given trouble in the past.

But one needn't fret about confusing or harming the student by teaching him these materials. They are simply the facts of the English language, not only vouched for by a large body of scholarship but manifested constantly in our daily communication. One can teach them with supreme confidence that one's students will do as well as anybody's in any examination to which they are likely to be subjected. They should do a good deal better.

WHAT TO EXPECT OF THE STUDENT

One teacher who read the manuscript of this book commented that the average high school student will find the explanatory chapters rather difficult going. This is of course true, and it is by no means assumed that the book is self-teaching. Presumably the teacher will not merely assign a chapter and expect the student to read it and proceed to a successful working of the exercises. Ordinarily the material in each chapter should be explained and discussed in class as well as read by the student.

The chapters have indeed a twofold function. One is obvious: to provide the student with an explanation of the material. This, supplemented by class discussion and perhaps rephrasing by the teacher, should permit him to do the exercises. Presumably much exercise work will be done when the teacher is not available to help, and the student will then need to refer to the text for matters which are not clear. For most students, neither class discussion alone nor the text alone will be sufficient. Both together should be.

The other function of the explanatory material is rather special: it is

to instruct the teacher. Because of the very recent development of this field it must be supposed that very few teachers are familiar with either the general principles of linguistic science or their particular application to the English language. I have therefore had to anticipate a good many questions which I think will be less likely to arise when the field is more widely known. Some of these concern points scarcely necessary to an introductory study of the subject. But I know from experience that if they are not resolved, the teacher, and the better students also, will feel puzzled and uneasy. Sometimes I have dealt with such matters in notes at the end of the chapter, with a frank invitation to the incurious to skip it if it doesn't matter. Sometimes I have simply elaborated the chapter a little more than would be necessary in other circumstances.

I should advise the teacher to read the book through, if possible, before beginning to teach it. I say "if possible" because I know from my own classroom work that it isn't always; like everyone else I am usually just one chapter ahead of the students when I am using a new text. This one can be done that way too, but the teacher will run a somewhat greater risk here of being asked questions that can be answered only if he has read further. Of course the experienced teacher knows that not all questions should be answered as they arise. We must frequently say, "We'll take that up next week or next month." But it's a comfort to know in advance whether we really will or not.

I do not mean to imply that, even with the elaboration mentioned, I have answered all the questions about the English language that might be raised. Any living language is tremendously complicated, and a complete display of all its nooks and crannies would require several books the size of this one. For example, nothing is said in the text about the classification of *all* in "All the men went away." One could pursue this matter, of course, and show that there are two common English words that pattern in this way — *all* and *both*. One could then call these two words a structure group and perhaps give them a name — say *pre-determiners*. But this process would have to be repeated a great many times before all possible structures in all dialects were accounted for, and even then the picture would not be complete. As the lan-

guage grows and changes, new structures and patterns are developed.

Clearly such a complete picture is not necessary for high school work, and I think most teachers would not want it. We must be satisfied with seeing the main plan of the language, the shape of the high-frequency patterns. This means that the teacher must be prepared to receive questions, which he cannot answer, which perhaps no one could answer in the present stage of language study. When this happens, the student must be given the explanation that I have given here. I have tried to prepare for this by a similar discussion in Chapter 1, but no doubt it will have to be repeated.

This response is not possible in the traditional approach, and we have here an illustration of an important difference between the two disciplines. The tradition begins with the assumption that all words are classifiable into eight (sometimes seven or nine) word categories or parts of speech. If that is so, then one should be able to take any random sentence and classify all the words. But this is something that I have never been able to do, and I have given most of my life to the study of grammar. Even with the hardest pushing and pulling and the most imaginative invocation of ellipsis there always remained items which wouldn't conceivably fit any of the pigeonholes.

Here we take a different tack entirely. We say that there are four large form classes and an unspecified number of structure groups. We list the obvious features of the form classes and describe the most important structure groups. We don't say that this is all there is to the language; we merely say that they make up the main patterns, the ones over which we want the student to achieve conscious control. We are not interested in teaching him how to classify all words in random sentences; this is both unnecessary and beyond our powers.

You will notice that few of the exercises call for word classification of any kind, even of selected sentences. Most of the exercises are of the opposite sort: the student is given a pattern and asked to produce a sentence from the pattern. Thus the emphasis is constantly on sentence building rather than on sentence analysis. This seems more in accord with the purposes of language teaching. Incidentally, it does not encourage the asking of unanswerable questions.

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EXERCISE WORK

I have tried to provide an abundance — a superfluity, indeed — of exercises. Presumably very few classes will work through all the exercises of every chapter. The intention is to give the teacher some possibility of selection and of apportioning the work according to the ability of the students.

Wherever feasible, the exercises are graded in difficulty. If there are twenty items, the first three or four will be such that the very slowest student can manage them; the last three or four will be within the powers of only the very best. Some of the exercises are in the nature of puzzles and often can be most palatable (and even entertaining) to the student if approached as puzzles.

This is particularly true of the formula exercises. The question of whether to use a symbol system of numbers and letters in addition to the more orthodox terminology was debated at some length. The arguments against it are that the symbols are one more thing to learn and that the formulas have a rather forbidding aspect.

But the arguments in favor of the symbols and the resulting formulas seemed weightier. Once they are learned, the teacher will be saved a great deal of blackboard work. It is obviously easier to write "D 1 2 3," if one wishes to make a point about a sentence of the type "The meal tasted good," than it is to write "determiner noun verb adjective." And the symbols are not really hard to learn, not nearly so hard as the comparable symbols of chemistry. Nor are there many of them. For most students an hour or so of practice is all that is necessary. In addition, wherever the exercises require the symbols, a key is provided at the foot of the page.

Furthermore, the formulas have the virtue of exhibiting the naked structure of our sentence patterns. In the formula, lexical meaning is stripped off and the student sees the structural meaning by itself. Nothing else seems to work so well in building pattern sense and sentence sense.

Finally, I have included the formulas because I have found, somewhat to my surprise, that students enjoy them — more than any other type of exercise. They do tend to treat them as puzzles and to get considerable satisfaction from working them out. It is for this reason

that I have included very difficult ones toward the end of some of the exercises. The good students will get no pleasure if the puzzle is too easily solved.

The teacher will be continually surprised with what the students will come up with in response to the formulas. If encouraged, the student will push the pattern as far as it will go, thinking of unusual verbs and nouns, slang terms sometimes, and so on. My own practice is to accept any sentence offered provided that it is natural and idiomatic and that it fits the formula.

Occasionally it may be found that a formula will yield two contrasting patterns. When this happens, the formula is at fault; some additional symbol should have been added to signal the distinction. It shouldn't happen very often, however, because these materials have been worked over in class for several years, and most of the bugs should be out.

In a very few exercises, students may produce wrong patterns from the formulas because the patterns have not yet been covered. For example, the formula for direct objects ($D\ 1^a\ 2\ D\ 1^b$), when first given, is actually ambiguous. The student will probably give such a sentence as "My father mowed the lawn," but he might reasonably give "My father went that way." If this happens, the teacher can just say that this second pattern is not the direct object pattern and that it will be explained and distinguished in a later chapter. Here again it will help to have read ahead in the book.

WRITING

It is assumed that students using this book will also, concurrently, be engaged in writing of some sort — themes, reports, letters, or whatever. We all know that improvement in writing comes primarily from practice in writing. A book of this sort is intended to hasten the achievement of mastery of written English, but it cannot lead to that achievement unless the student is steadily engaged in practice. I shall venture here to give a few suggestions in regard to student writing, though I am perhaps going beyond my proper sphere in doing so.

It seems to me that one of the most serious problems in English classes has been that of morale. This is certainly so on the language side, on the literature side less so. Students respond to injunctions to

improve their writing much as children do to injunctions to wash their ears: they know they ought to, but they aren't much interested and they hate being badgered about it. As for grammar, most boys and girls are convinced that it was invented purely and simply to torture boys and girls.

That at least was my experience until, a few years ago, I began teaching the materials now presented in this book. Since then I have had many difficulties, but lack of interest has never been one of them. Never. My students have at times been confused and upset and downright angry, but they have never exhibited that boredom and sullenness that I found so common and so distressing when I taught grammar in the old fashion.

I think the reason is twofold. First of all, we are dealing here with tangible facts, not with a remote and dubious logic. The language structure as it unfolds is immediately manifest in the language we speak and hear and read and write. The appeal is to something very close and interesting. Actually nearly everyone has an absorbing interest in the way he talks and the way other people talk. Consider how often casual conversation turns to points of language.

The other reason, I believe, why my students find this study more interesting than the other is that I have learned to approach it first and foremost as a thing of interest, not as a means of social or literary improvement. The study does of course lead to improvement in writing — in sentence structure and punctuation and so on — and that is why we give it place in the curriculum. But so far as the student is concerned, I think it a very good idea to soft-pedal this aspect of the study, especially at the beginning.

You will notice that in the first part of the book practically no effort is made to apply the material to writing difficulties. The focus is on the language itself, not on what may be done after one has learned to understand the language. The latter part of the book contains more reference to direct application, but even here the intention is to keep it as unobtrusive as possible. It may sound paradoxical to say that the student will enjoy the study more if he thinks it won't do him any good, but I do believe this is close to the truth.

Now if writing is going on concurrently with the study of the book, it might be wise to view the writing with something of the same

attitude. I have come to think that it is only the very good student, or at least the advanced student, who can profit very much from having his papers copiously corrected and from being required to revise them. For the poor student, marginal corrections are likely to produce only bafflement and despair. As he writes paper after paper only to have them pitilessly dissected and their miseries displayed, he is in danger of acquiring an abiding hatred for English in all its aspects.

Perhaps I state the case extremely. But I'm sure we have all had abundant experience with boys or girls for whom the weekly writing assignments are one colossal failure after another. In an hour of deep thought and pencil chewing they produce half-a-dozen tortured, crabbed lines, miserably spelled, completely without form, empty of idea. And yet even these students actually have a very good command of the language. Put them together to talk and they can run on indefinitely, expressing very complicated ideas in very complicated speech patterns. What they cannot do is get those patterns on paper.

I believe that such students should be allowed to write a long time before they are corrected at all. It doesn't matter what they write — autobiography or descriptions or journals or even stream of consciousness writing. The important thing is that they accustom themselves to the process, get used to the pen moving along the page, develop some kind of fluency. It is only when they have reached the point at which they can look at a blank piece of paper without getting paralyzed that they will be able to give us anything correctable.

But nothing is so conducive to that paralysis as the feeling that whatever one writes has about a fifty-fifty chance of producing a red mark in the margin. For this reason I have in recent years followed the practice of not marking the papers of students in slow or remedial sections. What I want from them first of all is fluency, an abundance of writing, without any consideration of whether the writing is good, bad, or mediocre. This writing runs parallel with a study of the language, such as that which *Patterns of English* provides, but without, at first, the drawing of any connection between the two.

When fluency has been achieved — and it is surprising how fast it comes sometimes — then the teacher has something to work on, something to correct. But this is a delicate point and should be approached delicately if one is to avoid a relapse. I have known students who have

learned to write at a great rate shrink back to the agonized six-line-an-hour composition at the first hint of the red pencil. I should begin by correcting spelling mistakes and then go on by degrees to the straightening out of punctuation and sentence structure.

It will be found that in this process many problems will solve themselves without intervention by the teacher. The student should be building up, through study of the text and working of the exercises, a feeling for the structure of sentences, and this will manifest itself in the writing even if no specific application is made. In general, the less specific application there is, the better.

Another virtue of not correcting papers is this: one can require more papers. This is no small point with English classes as crowded as they are now and as they are likely to be in the foreseeable future. The teacher with a hundred and fifty or more students can read and correct and annotate a paper a week from each one only by the most heroic expenditure of effort. But it is the correcting that takes the time, not the reading. If we don't correct, we can have the student do considerably more writing, to his ultimate profit.

I do think that the teacher ought to read the papers, or at least most of them. And one ought to find some way of letting the student know that his papers are being read, perhaps by an occasional allusion to the content or by an occasional conference at which teacher and student look over some of the papers together. The student doesn't like to feel that what he writes simply falls down a well. But even that would be better than having him write just a dozen lines a week. No progress is possible at that rate.

But I am no doubt going beyond my field in giving this advice on writing. I shall now return to some specific matters in the text itself.