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A summary of research in written and oral composition.

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THESIS
A Summary of Research
In Written and Oral Composition

Submitted by

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Boston University
School of Education
Library
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This study is part of a summary of research in the reading and language arts fields in which the experimental studies done at Boston University between 1930 and 1953 were reviewed. The complete study was done by: Evelyn Crocker, Ruth Cullen, John Deasy, Marjorie Follansbee, Sylvia Gavel, Claire Grossman, Mary Holmes, Ruth Lurie, Anne Melker, Viola Petrocelli, and Harriett Wilcox.
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The following studies in the field of language arts, done between the years of 1938 and 1953 at Boston University lend themselves to five divisions: (1) Preferences in written composition (preferences in type of composition assignment, preference of English in relation to other subjects, and investigation into diverse interests of boys and girls); (2) Creative composition skills (the development of originality in writing, the stimulation of the flow of ideas, and the evaluation of the topic versus the situation type of assignment); (3) Comprehension difficulties in sentence structures; that is, the relationship of various sentence structures to comprehension; (4) Analysis of textbooks on oral reporting to determine the opportunities for oral activities; and, (5) Vocabulary development (individual differences in extent of vocabulary, training to stimulate use of descriptive words and phrases, the prediction of quality of written vocabulary through tests, and the teaching of vocabulary in meaningful context). The studies ran a gamut from fourth grade through high school level. Although the number is few as compared with the extensive studies done in other areas such as spelling for example, the findings are revealing and helpful, the contradictions negligible, and altogether the
co-results compatible and gratifying.

Preferences in Written Composition

Investigation in the area of preferences in composition writing reveals correlated conclusions in diverse age levels and approach. Viglione (23) used a questionnaire with 185 pupils in the fifth and sixth grades to determine their interests and preferences as suggested by five leading language series. Questionnaire constituted four forms, each containing twenty-four topics and one type of letter, business or friendly. Topics suggested were: a personal experience, an emotion-alized title, a humorous situation, a look up and tell item, and a making and doing things item. Percentage of preferences ranged from 31.98% to 83.36%. The children indicated a preference for the friendly letter over the business letter but the difference was not significant; however, there was a significant difference in favor of the girls in the appeal of friendly letters as a type of assignment.

Joyce (13) revealed the significant fact that notwithstanding the indication that English is low-rated as to preference, the I.Q. reveals English achievement scores to outrank those of spelling, literature, vocabulary, and reading areas. Joyce, also used the questionnaire method with 231 pupils in the sixth grade to check their preferences after the administration of thirty selected lessons in English, using McKee's Improving Your Language text. English ranked lowest of subjects "liked", tenth on subjects "disliked", add eighth in subject preference
survey. A significant sex difference was evidenced indicating that the girls like written work better than do boys.

McDonald (15) corroborates and further amplifies the foregoing results with her findings in grades seven, eight, and nine. She determined the following order of preferences: letter (friendly letter preferred), outline, paragraph, plays, report, and article, but with no significant differences in the items or between boys and girls, and only slight differences in choice between younger and older students. The topic rather than the type of assignment influenced their choice more, those dealing with personal experience and interest rating higher.

Wilcox (25) again found a preference with ninth grade pupils for the friendly letter to social and business letters and determined in addition a preference for book reports to magazine articles and committee reports; stories to poems and plays. Here he diverged from the others by his investigation of the areas of interest for boys and girls - boys preferring sports and out-of-door activities, travel and adventure, radio and movies, flying and airplanes, honor, fair play and health. The girls' preferences were success and pleasure, friends and friendship, radio personalities, travel and adventure, dances and dancing, cooking, honor, fair play, self-improvement and manners. Note the variation in the order of assignment preferences in composition with McDonald: letter, report, original composition, article, explanation, and outline, with a significant difference between letter and outline.

Affirmation of Joyce's assertion that English is low-rated
in preference is given by Macbeth (14) who presented eight kinds of English activities to sixth and seventh grades in such a manner that they would clearly indicate the preference of the pupil. The statement of preferences was computed by use of a questionnaire. He found, surprisingly, that the sex of the pupils seems to influence his choice in the activities enjoyed, the boys preferring social arts, and the girls preferring written composition, while both sexes were unanimous in their dislike for capitalization and punctuation, and grammar and usage activities.

Creative Composition Writing

Eldridge (7) sought to develop originality in the sixth grade through creative composition writing lesson plans. Two sets of compositions in three sixth grades were obtained from both control and experimental groups - one set before the experiment - the other set after the experiment was concluded, the experimental group having the benefit of the teaching plans. He discovered that ideas and emotions conducing more vivid and fluent expressions were awakened, with the tendency toward superior production of work under the training plan in girls over boys, and in pupils with progressively higher I.Q.'s than with those of equivalent I.Q.'s lacking creative training.

In similar vein, Ferris, et al., (8) attempted to stimulate the flow of ideas in 285 children in grades four, five, and six, by administering four lesson techniques, i.e., beginning sentences, pictures, occupational titles, and paragraphs.
A preliminary non-stimulated composition was used as a basis for evaluating the effectiveness of the experimental lessons. She concluded that the motivated lessons induced superior quality and quantity of ideas. 

Nicolson (18) deduced that the situation type of assignment definitely produces better results in the form of more words and more ideas than the topic assignment in his evaluation of 520 compositions written by tenth grade pupils in a college preparatory high school. Four sophomore classes wrote on four topics - two situation and two topics. The four forms were on argumentation, description, narration, and exposition, based on pupil's preferences - travel, ethics, adventure, and sports - according to Coleman's survey.

Donovan (5) who doesn't specify any particular grade level, corroborates Nicolson's assertions in a topic versus a situation type of study in which each pupil wrote on one situation and one topic assignment based on two subjects - city and country - assumed to be as inherently alike as possible. A preference questionnaire was used. He amplifies Nicolson's findings by stating that "better stimulation of ideas is shown in the situation assignment with pupils whose average school achievement is .75 or better, in contrast to those whose achievement is below .75." Donovan concludes further that the topic type assignment is preferred despite the superior results obtained in the situation assignment.

Fitzpatrick (9) approached the problem at its focal point by attempting to measure the extent and readiness of the assoc-
ational abilities of high school pupils through an objective test containing ten theme titles, allowing for sixty-eight possible associative responses. The test was administered to 215 pupils from two different New England high schools. He derived a high correlation between English written composition marks and general English marks, but a negligible to moderate correlation between general English, English composition, and reading comprehension grades and the association of ideas.

Brownrigg (1) strove to arouse the flow of ideas with 283 children in seven sixth grades through a series of exercises in composition planning by means of thought-provoking questions. The experimental group (96) had two practices before they wrote a composition - the first practice was a class discussion on planning a topic, - in the second practice the children were asked a series of questions and were instructed to write their own plan, - in the third effort the children wrote a composition applying what they learned in the two practices. The control group (136) was given an informal test at the beginning and the end of the experiment. Equations on four variables were: C.A., M.A., language score, and an informal test given at the beginning and end of the experiment. There was a statistically significant difference between the two groups in favor of the experimental group. A companion study to Brownrigg was made by Wallace (24) with eighth grade pupils with compatible conclusions.
Comprehension Difficulties in Sentence Structures

The studies in this category succeed in bringing into relief the stumbling blocks children encounter in comprehension of the various sentence structures. Henley (11) in grades three and four arranged the structures in order of difficulty and then studied their relationship to comprehension difficulties. She incorporated into her procedure an inventory of English constructions in statement and question form and then administered true-false and multiple choice tests in five levels of difficulty, maintaining vocabulary below third grade level. Results indicated that comprehension has little bearing on sentence structure, although such elements as long sentences, compound-complex sentences, etc., can relate to comprehension difficulty.

An identical study to Henley's was made by Halpin (10) who tested high frequency English constructions in paragraph form, using multiple choice statements of four choices, either words or groups of words. His results, like Henley's indicate no criterion of relationship between frequency and comprehension of sentence structure.

Manning (16), likewise, purported to measure the relation between understanding and sentence sense development with seventh grade children, determining such data as: recognition of complete and incomplete sentences; recognition of simple subject and predicate; control of run-on sentences; etc. Two-thirds of the test items were statistically significant.

Mullen (17) who did a companion study to Henley's and Halpin's used the same technique and arrived at compatible conclu-
sions on the whole but indicates that while some factors in structure do relate to difficulty, others do not. Some of her findings are in accord with Henley's, while others are not. She concluded that the elements causing greatest difficulty are: parenthetical questions, comparative with 'than' in questions, compound predicate, verb with subject inverted in statements or commands, certain adjectives, certain combinations of dependent clauses and phrases.

Downs (6) confined his investigation to a group of nineteen boys at the tenth grade level electing the technical curriculum with I.Q.'s ranging from 77 to 127. The boys were urged to increase their skill in speaking and writing that English could be a tool which would help them advance in their occupations and that they might express themselves clearly and effectively in all their associations for the personal satisfaction it would give them. His problem was to apply the basic principles and procedures set forth in Fundamentals of Secondary School Teaching and the course in the Unit Method as presented by Roy O. Billett. A questionnaire determined the reactions to the test. Downs observes that the employment of this method would create a greater interest among these technical boys in academic subjects; that there would be fewer failures and that disciplinary problems would be reduced to a minimum.

Analysis of Textbooks on Oral Reporting

Serignano (20) attempted to determine the type and number of opportunities given for oral language in the fourth grades,
through analysis of ten language textbooks. The following items were selected as a basis of analysis: individual activities as announcements, descriptions, explanations, giving directions, messages, personal experiences and telling stories; individual-group activities, such as activities which a committee or group of children work upon with one child giving oral talk such as reports and summaries; group activities like dramatizations, discussions, introductions, and telephone conversations. She found that textbooks vary widely in their provision for training in oral expression and place emphasis on diverse activities.

A similar study was done by Cummings (4) with fifth grade textbooks. From twelve English textbooks she selected the following thirteen points for oral reporting: announcements, conversation, descriptions, discussions, dramatizations, explanations, giving directions, giving interviews, introductions, meetings, reporting, story telling, and using the telephone. She, like Serignano, found an inconsistent treatment by the authors of the objectives of teaching oral recall, noting that some texts treated as few as eight divisions of oral reporting, while others included all thirteen.

Vocabulary Development

Individual differences in the extent and level of the vocabulary used by 219 intermediate grade children were studied by Corson (3) through employment of film which was shown to the children with comment on title only. The written
reports on the film story were evaluated on (1) total number of words written, (2) number of different words appearing above first three levels of the Durrell Remedial Reading List, and (3) number of different words that do not appear on the list at all. She found that 80% of the words used were contained in the first three levels of the Durrell list, and that about 90% appeared somewhere in the list. The increase from grade to grade in the average amount written was noted between boys and girls. She observed that the children who wrote the most tended to use of more varied vocabulary.

Robinson (19) tested fifth grade children to determine if gain could be made in the use of descriptive words after specific teaching. He administered two pretests to both control and experimental groups, one, to write as many colorful words as possible, the other to tell all they could see in a picture. A set of fifteen exercises were used with experimental group to stimulate thinking and use of descriptive words and phrases. Control group followed routine language course. Final test was administered at end of specific teaching. Results of combined stimuli were statistically significant in favor of experimental group.

The narrow scope, that of measuring only recognition vocabulary, to which vocabulary tests have thus far been confined, challenged Cates (2) to augment her investigation to discover how closely these tests predict written vocabulary. The recall test, divided into five sections, each having similar directions, asked the pupils to list as many words as possible under the following categories: names of colors,
ames of animals; names of workers and leaders; words which
tell size; and words which tell how persons or animals move.
The items of the recognition test were arranged in mixed or-
der in five sections, the first containing many of the easier
items, the last section many of the more difficult. Results
indicated no significant difference between the tests, al-
though girls obtain higher scores on vocabulary tests, while
boys get higher scores in richness and length of vocabulary.

Shea (21) attempted to develop and evaluate a method for
enriching the writing vocabulary with sixty-four seventh grade
children, using an experimental and controlled group of equal
number. The control group followed the local course of study
on units of capitalization, punctuation, and correct usage,
and literature in addition. The experimental group was taught
all except literature. Planned lessons were substituted con-
sisting of painting word pictures through literary models,
pictures, and experiences. She deduced that both bright and
dull children in both groups showed gain in number of descript-
tive words used. The experimental group made the significant
gain, with no sex differences indicated.

Speight (22) went directly to the source and taught a
specialized vocabulary (words causing comprehension difficulty)
gathered by a selected group of retarded eighth grade pupils
from their textbooks, source materials, lectures, etc. The
experimental group, those who compiled the list, had special
study in social studies and science, while the control group
followed the regular program. She found that general, as well
as technical vocabulary was superior in the experimental group. She suggests that schools should recognize the fact that failure for the sensitive, intelligent, well-meaning child is a serious matter and that ways should be planned to teach that special group. It would appear, she concluded, that those pupils can master vocabulary thoroughly taught and put into meaningful context.

Jones (12) evaluated a method for improving personal description and characterization in written composition conducted with control and experimental groups of ninth grade children. Scores obtained from five experimental groups (106 children) and from five control groups (106 children). Groups were equated on intelligence, mental age, and chronological age, according to Pintner Psychological Test. Experimental group was instructed through a series of exercises to notice facial expressions of classmates, to pantomime certain situations, give words that best describe a facial expression, choose expressions that give best description of an actor, etc. Control group had regular classroom instruction. Criterion tests administered to both groups before and after the experiment and a third time to obtain delayed recall response. Statistically significant gains were found between control and experimental groups in favor of experimental groups. Correlation was found between achievement of final composition tests and Pintner Advanced Psychological tests.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Problem: To develop and evaluate a series of exercises in composition planning by means of thought provoking questions in grade six.

Procedure: Children of seven sixth grades chosen for the experiment. Four units of topics used. Each unit included three related topics making twelve in all. Experimental group of 96 children had two practices before they wrote a composition. In the first practice there was a class discussion on planning a topic. In the second practice the children were asked a series of questions and instructed to write their own plan. In the third practice the children wrote a composition applying what they had learned in the two practices to this composition. 136 children in the control group were given an informal test at the beginning and the end of the experiment. The raw scores were computed and the results were compared. The children were equated on four variables: C.A., M.A., language score, and an informal test given at the beginning and the end of the experiment. The experiment lasted six weeks.

Conclusions: 1. The initial test showed a difference of .27 between the two groups in mean raw score.

2. In the mean of the final test, it was found that the experimental group had made a gain of 10.27 over the mean of the initial test; and, the control group had made a
loss of -1.01 over the mean of the initial test.

3. In comparing the mean gain of the experimental group with the gain of the control group there was a difference of 11.53 in raw score with a C.R. of 3.80.
Problem: To determine the relationships between two types of tests and written vocabulary. Tests thus far have been measuring, almost wholly, recognition vocabulary. How closely do these predict written vocabulary?

Materials Used: Thorndike list of 10,000 words commonly used. Durrell "Frequency of Use" word list.

Procedure: The first test - the Recall Test, was divided into five sections, each section having similar directions asking the pupil to list as many words as possible under each category. The second test was the Recognition Test. Items were arranged in mixed order in five sections. The first section contained many of the easier items, the last section many of the more difficult. The categories were: names of colors, names of animals, names of workers and leaders, words which tell size, and words which tell how a person or animal moves.

Conclusions: One test did not show a significantly higher score in relation to written vocabulary than the other. There are indications that boys in general have a slightly higher written vocabulary than girls, although this is not a definite conclusion.

1. Children are able to recognize approximately four times as many words as they are able to recall.

2. Recall tests predict only slightly more than recognition tests the length and quality of written vocabulary.
3. Girls obtain higher scores than boys on vocabulary tests, while boys get higher scores in richness and length of vocabulary.

4. There is a higher correlation between vocabulary tests and richness of vocabulary than with total word count.

Problem: To discover how intermediate grade children differ in the number of words used to describe the same situation and the differences in the level of vocabulary used.

Materials: One silent film of one-reel length, Leading a Dog's Life.

Procedure: 1. Before the film was shown the children were told how reporters watched events such as sports events carefully and then wrote the account for their papers. They were told that they were to pretend to be reporters and write what they saw in the film.

   2. The film was shown with comment on the title only.

   3. After seeing the film the reports were written.

   4. The experiment was carried on with 291 children from the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades of two communities, one a residential town, the other a manufacturing city.

   5. Three word counts were made: (1) total number of words written, (2) number of different words not appearing on the first three levels of the Durrell Remedial Reading List, and (3) number of different words that do not appear anywhere on the list.

Major Findings and Conclusions:

1. The vocabulary obtained was slightly more than 28,000
running words.

2. From 77 to 80% of the words used were found on the first three levels of the Durrell Remedial Reading List.

3. From 89 to 91% of the words used appeared somewhere on the list.

4. The average amounts written increased steadily from grade to grade and were statistically significant differences.

5. There was a great overlapping between grades in the amount written, though the average amount increased steadily.

6. Children who wrote the most tended to use the most varied vocabulary.

7. There was no significant difference between the boys and girls in the amount written.

Problem: To analyze twelve English textbooks in current use in the fifth grade, obtained from fifteen book companies, for content material covering oral reports.

Procedure: Thirteen points for oral reporting were selected on the basis of those items which other studies, or recognized authorities have considered important or pertinent to this application. The categories were: announcements, conversation, descriptions, discussions, dramatizations, explanations, giving directions, giving reviews, introductions, meetings, reporting, story telling, using the telephone, original productions.

Each book was examined page by page to discover aims or objectives for the teaching or oral recall.

Findings and Conclusions: The authors of some texts treated as few as eight divisions of oral reporting, while others had all thirteen. The total number of chances to perform in each book varied from 266 to 572.

Conversation received the greatest number of chances for oral reporting, 431. Story telling, dramatizations, and reporting were rated high. Using the telephone, giving directions and meetings received low ratings. Authors do not agree to the importance, the amount, and the variety of practice needed for oral reporting.

Problem: To find out the relative effectiveness of two types of composition assignments - the topic or situation.

Materials Used: 1. Selection of two approximately equal subjects (on basis of interest and knowledge).

2. Questionnaire to reveal pupil preference and to check upon assumption that pupil interest and knowledge re city and country were approximately equal.

Procedure: Two topic assignments and two situation assignments were devised and given to pupils. Each pupil wrote on one situation assignment and on one topic assignment. One week separated the writing of the two compositions. The assignments were based upon two subjects - city and country - assumed to be as inherently alike as possible. A questionnaire was also given the pupils asking their opinion on the preference of the two types of assignments. 117 pupils from six tenth grade English classes in suburban town used in study.

Findings and Conclusions: 1. Pupils who had an average school achievement of 75.0 or better and who wrote on the situation assignment first and then the topic assignment, did better on the situation assignment, the C.R. of the difference being 3.24.

2. Pupils whose English achievement
was below 75.0 and who first wrote on the topic assignment and then the situation assignment showed no significant difference in ideas. The C.R. was 1.74.

3. Most pupils preferred the topic assignment but the experiment revealed that they did better compositions on the situation assignments.
Problem: The application of the basic principles and procedures set forth in *Fundamentals of Secondary School Teaching* and the course in the *Unit Method* as presented by Roy O. Billett.

Scope: This unit was built for a group of nineteen boys at the tenth-grade level electing the technical curriculum and choosing electricity as their shop work. Chronological ages range from fourteen years and three months to sixteen years and five months. I.Q. range from 77 to 127.

Procedure: An introductory talk was given by the teacher to arouse in the pupils a real desire to increase their skill in speaking and writing. The teacher indicated that the pupils should study the practical applications of English for two main reasons:

1. To learn to use English as a tool which will help him to advance in his occupation.

2. To learn to express himself clearly and effectively at work and in all his associations with other people for the personal satisfaction it gives him.

The teacher gave the objective test built for the unit in order to learn what each pupil knows about sentence construction. At conclusion of the unit a questionnaire was given to each pupil to determine pupil's reactions to the test. A pre-test and a
final test were given.

Conclusions: 1. All of the boys showed some educative growth.
   2. All of the pupils preferred the objective type of test to the essay type.
   3. All the pupils felt that they had an opportunity to work at their own level of intelligence.
   4. All felt that there was more freedom in this method of learning and that the teacher had more time to help slow pupils.

It should be expected that, if this method were employed throughout the curriculum, these technical boys would have a greater interest in academic subjects, that there would be fewer failures, and that disciplinary problems would be reduced to a minimum.
Problem: Will sixth grade children respond more favorably to creative composition writing lesson plans than sixth grade children who have had no specific planning in creative composition writing during the same period of time?

Procedure: The following data were used: two sets of compositions from the control groups - totalling 82 pupils in three sixth grades - one set before the experiment began and another set after the experiment was concluded; two sets of compositions from the experimental sixth grade of the author, one set before and one set after the teaching of the experimental lesson plans; I.Q.'s of each pupil from cumulative record forms - figures derived from group tests; grades assigned to compositions of the before and after groups - using the rating scale; and the sex of each child.

Conclusions: With specially prepared creative composition writing lesson plans a class can have its ideas and feelings aroused so as to be able to express more fluently and vividly.

Those with progressively higher I.Q.'s will tend to produce better work under the training than those with equivalent I.Q.'s who do not have the training in creative writing.

Girls will tend to do better work than the boys in creative
composition after training as well as before training.

Problem: To compare four lessons to stimulate the flow of ideas in creative writing in grades four, five, and six. A preliminary non-stimulated composition was obtained in order to have a basis for evaluating the effectiveness of the experimental lessons.


Procedure: The administration of the four methods was preceded by a preliminary non-stimulated composition. Then followed four weeks of creative expression using a different series of lessons each week to stimulate the flow of ideas. One-half of the children completed the exercises in the above order. The remaining groups varied the weekly order of lessons. 285 unselected children were used in the study. I.Q.'s were obtained for a selected group within the population.

Findings and Conclusions: 1. Difference in number of ideas in grades four, five, and six, in preliminary compositions and beginning sentence compositions was statistically significant in favor of preliminary compositions.
2. Difference in number of ideas in grades four, five and six in preliminary compositions and picture technique was statistically significant in favor of the compositions stimulated by the picture technique.

3. Difference in number of ideas in grades four, five, and six in preliminary compositions and occupational titles was in favor of occupational titles but only statistically so in grade four.

4. Difference in number of ideas in grades four, five, and six in preliminary compositions and paragraph method was statistically significant in favor of the paragraph technique.

5. Beginning sentence technique was superior in quality to preliminary technique in grades four, five, and six, but the difference was not statistically significant.

6. Picture technique in grades four, five, and six was superior in quality to preliminary compositions but was only statistically significant in grades four and six.

7. Occupational title technique was superior in quality to preliminary compositions in grades four, five and six, but was only statistically significant in grades four and five.

8. Paragraph technique as compared with preliminary compositions in grades four, five, and six showed a qualitative difference which was statistically significant in favor of the paragraph type.

9. On comparing high and low I.Q.'s on the basis of number of ideas in grades four, five, and six the differences were not great enough to be statistically significant
in either direction, except in grade six, where the picture technique alone showed a statistically significant difference.

10. In all five techniques, the high I.Q. was superior to the low I.Q. on basis of quality in grades four, five, and six, showing statistically significant difference by the picture, occupational title, and paragraph technique in grade four, and a statistically significant difference by the paragraph method in grade six.

Grunebaum, Louise C.; Houghton, Evelyn L.; Outlaw, Guy T.

**Problem:** To construct and administer a test to measure the extent and readiness of the associational responses.

**Materials:** An objective test containing ten theme titles allowing for 68 possible associative responses.

**Procedure:** 1. The test was constructed as described, including four practice tests.

   2. It was administered to 215 pupils from two different New England high schools.

**Major Findings and Conclusions:**

1. A low positive correlation (+.22) between general English grades and the association of ideas.

2. A low positive correlation (+.14) between English composition grades and association of ideas.

3. A negligible correlation between reading comprehension and the association of ideas. (+.068)

4. A moderate correlation between intelligence and the association of ideas. (+.36)

5. High correlation between English written composition marks and general English marks. (+.67)

**Problem:** To arrange in order of difficulty a variety of sentence structures and to determine the degree to which they present comprehension difficulties for children.

**Materials:** English constructions by Thorndike, Vocabulary from National Kindergarten List, Free Association List, Buckingham-Doch Combined Word List, and the Durrell Word List.

**Procedure:** A test was constructed to test forty construction of the highest frequency in paragraph form, testing each sentence twice. Multiple choice statements of four choices, either words or groups of words used. Vocabulary was maintained below fifth grade level. The test, in two parts, nine paragraphs in the first part and seven in the second part, was administered to six fifth grades.

**Conclusions:** Results indicate that sentence structures, when tested in statement form do not necessarily offer the same comprehension difficulty as when tested in paragraph form. There is no relationship between frequency of sentence structure and its comprehension difficulty.
Problem: 1. To arrange in order of difficulty a variety of sentence structures.

2. To determine their relationship to comprehension difficulties.

Materials Used: Inventory of English constructions by Thorndike, Evans, Kennon, and Newcomb was used as a basis.

Procedure: 1. Forty-seven constructions in statement form and twenty-seven constructions in question form were selected on basis of frequency of use.

2. Two true-false tests and a completion five multiple choice one word answer test made up to check constructions in statement form.

3. One multiple choice five word answer test to check question form.

4. Words used in test were kept below third grade level. All three tests given to four third grades and to four fourth grades. Tests were eliminated of any child with reading grade below the second month of the third year. (Metropolitan Achievement Test)

5. Each test arranged in five levels of difficulty.

6. Errors in both tests were combined and totals arranged in five levels of difficulty.
**Conclusions:** Results indicate that frequency of a sentence structure has little to do with comprehension difficulty. The elements bearing greatest relation to comprehension difficulty are: long sentences; compound-complex sentences; compound subject; two objects; indirect before direct; infinitive used as a noun; noun in apposition; possessive with 'of'; comparative; adverb after verb; use of participle; words referring back to other word or words in the sentence.
Problem: To evaluate a method for improving personal description and characterization in written composition.

Delimitation of Study: 1. Experiment was done in 1946 with two control and two experimental groups and in 1947 with three control and three experimental groups of ninth grade children.

2. Scores were obtained from five experimental groups (106 children) and five control groups (106 children).

3. These groups were equated on intelligence, mental age, and chronological age according to the Pintner Psychological Test.

4. Three teachers cooperated in this experiment.

Procedure: 106 ninth grade children in an experimental group were given exercises for the improvement of description and characterizations. There were 14 lessons which were taught twice a week during a seven week period. These lessons were mimeographed on a sheet of paper instructing the child to notice facial expressions of his classmates, to pantomime certain situations, give words that best describe a facial expression, choose expressions that give the best description of an action, etc. Children in the control group had the regular composition class according to the town's course of study.
Criterion tests were administered to both the control and the experimental groups before and after the experiment and for a third time to obtain a delayed recall response. Scores were computed by analyzing the differences in mean gains between the criterion tests.

Conclusions: (The 1946 groups are called sub-experiments 1 and 2; and the 1947 groups are called sub-experiments 3, 4 and 5.)

1. The difference in mean gains of the entire control group and the entire experimental group on the composition pre-test and the final test was 12.899.

2. The critical ratio of the differences of the mean gains between the control group (1 and 2) and the experimental group (1 and 2) on the composition pre-test and the composition final test was 7.674.

3. The critical ratio of the experimental group (3, 4, and 5) on the composition pre-test and on the final test is 11.26.

4. The critical ratio of the differences of the mean gains between the control group (3, 4, and 5) and the experimental group (3, 4, and 5) on the composition pre-test and the composition and the composition final test was 5.651.

5. No significant correlation was found between the achievement of the final composition test of sub-experiments 3, 4, and 5 and the sub-tests of the Pintner's Advanced Psychological Tests.

Problem: 1. To determine whether sixth-grade children like or dislike language as a whole.

2. To determine their subject preference.

3. To determine whether sixth-grade children prefer English presented orally, silently, written, or with pictures included.

4. To consider the relative strength of all preferences indicated.

5. To offer a comparison of boys and girls as to preference.

6. To indicate ability in English through I.Q. tests.


2. Five trial questionnaires for evaluating worth of testing instrument.

Procedure: Preference questionnaire covering ten subject areas presented to 231 pupils. Data assimilated, checked and recorded. Computations involving use of critical ratio, percentages, and norms recorded. Tables established and analysis made of findings.

Conclusions: 1. English received lowest percentage in evaluation of subjects "liked".

2. English ranked tenth on subjects "disliked".
3. English ranked eighth in subject preference survey.
4. The three most preferred subjects are reading, arithmetic, and art.
5. Health is the least preferred subject.
6. No significant difference exists between the parts and the part above each item.
7. In considering sex differences it is significant that the writing part of the thirty lessons was disliked by the boys, as evidenced by the critical ratio of 2.78; whereas the girls indicated a liking for written work.
8. Considering weighted scores, English placed eighth in subject preference of boys, and received only three out of a possible 118 first place choices. Among 109 girls, it received only four first place selections.
9. Of special significance is the fact that despite the indication that English is low-rated as to preference, the I.Q. reveals that English achievement scores outranked those of spelling, literature, vocabulary, and reading areas.

*Cappola, Anthony; Raftopoulos, Celia.
Problem: To discover the preferences which pupils in the sixth and seventh grades have for different language arts activities after these activities had been presented in the order and manner in which they appear in English grades 6-1 and English grades 7-2.


Procedure: English grade 6-3 and English grade 7-4 were analyzed and a list of items that appeared in the first thirty lessons of each text was compiled. The resulting list of 31 items was regrouped under eight kinds of activities. These groups were then paired in such a manner that would clearly indicate the preference of the pupil with regard to the eight kinds of activities. An instrument was constructed to give the pupil an opportunity to state his preference in terms of liking and disliking the thirty-one special activities. A subject questionnaire was also given the pupils.

Conclusions: English rates very low in relation to other school subjects, rating seventh, eighth or ninth place. The pupils found social arts and written composition activities the most
enjoyable. The sex of the pupil seems to influence his preference, boys preferring social arts and girls preferring written composition. Both boys and girls found capitalization and punctuation, and grammar and usage activities the most distasteful. A subject questionnaire was used.
Problem: To discover the preferences of junior high school students in assignments in written composition.

Materials: A questionnaire of 24 groups of three items each, every two groups having six kinds of written composition assignments in rotation form and a change of topic after every two groups.

Procedure: 1. The questionnaire was administered to 136 boys and 114 girls in the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades from one village school.

2. The children were asked by their teachers to read all three items carefully and then to check their preference in each group.

Major Findings and Conclusions: 1. The order of preference in assignments was: letter, outline, paragraph, play, report, and article. There was no significant difference in these preferences.

2. There was no significant difference between the boys' and girls' preferences.

3. There were only slight differences in choices between the younger and older students.

4. The topics used influenced the children's choices more than the types of assignments, those
dealing with personal experiences and interest rating highest.

5. Friendly letters were preferred over other kinds of letters.
Problem: To construct and analyze a test which purports to measure the various understandings which directly relate to the sentence sense development of seventh grade pupils.

Materials Used: The city study course in English for the seventh grades was incorporated into the test construction.

Procedure: Set-up of the test was analytical in order to assist the teacher in diagnosing the sentence sense inadequacies of the pupils. The test includes:

Part I - Recognition of complete and incomplete sentences.
Part II - Recognition of the kinds of simple sentences.
Part III - Recognition of simple subjects and predicates.
Part IV - Control of the run-on sentences.
Part V - Sentence Variety
Part VI - Organization.

Test administered to 158 pupils enrolled in six typical classes within two schools in a not wholly unselected area in a metropolitan city. The socio-economic backgrounds differed. The intelligence quotients of the pupils varied in accordance to the normal curve. There were 215 items used in the study.

Conclusions: 1. 136 items have a critical ratio of 3.0 or more.
170 " " " " " " 2.576 or more.
194 items have a critical ratio of 1.960 or more.

2. 170 items are statistically significant.

3. This instrument may be considered as possessing curricular validity.

4. Data reveals stability of mean score and standard deviation.
Problem: 1. To discover whether certain factors of sentence structure are related to comprehension difficulty of grade eight pupils.

2. To arrange in order of difficulty the elements of sentence structure studied.

Materials: Thorndike list of 85 sentence structures of high frequency.

Procedure: Three controlled vocabulary tests were given to grade eight - a multiple-choice test using thirty-four structures, a true-false test and a completion test, each using in the same order fifty-one structures, including forty-nine statements, and exclamation, and a command.

Conclusions: Comparison of scores with reading comprehension grade on standard test showed high positive correlation between the two. Comparison of frequency of structure with rate of error for the structure showed no decisive evidence of a definite relationship. There are indications that certain factors in structure seem definitely related to difficulty while others were apparently unrelated. Some of the findings were in agreement with Henley, others were contradictory. Elements causing greatest difficulty are: parenthetical question, comparative with 'than' in questions, compound predicate, verb and subject inverted in statements, verb and object inverted.
in statements or commands, certain adjectives, certain combinations of dependent clauses and phrases.
Materials Used: 520 compositions written by tenth grade pupils in a college preparatory high school.

Procedure: Four sophomore classes were asked to write on four topics - two situation and two topics. The four forms were on argumentation, description, narration, and exposition. These four forms were based upon pupils' preferences - travel, ethics, adventure, and sports - according to J. H. Coleman's survey. Many composition scales were carefully considered for scoring purposes and results.

Conclusions: 1. The situation assignment definitely produces better results in the form of more words and more ideas over the topic assignment.

2. The situation assignment stimulates and directs the imagination to a greater extent than the topic assignment.

3. The situation assignment can be based effectively upon pupil preference.

4. The situation assignment results in more closely related responses than does the topic assignment.

5. The situation assignment should be used in cases where compositions are lacking in length or in ideas.

6. The situation assignment should not be used to the exclusion of the topic assignment.
7. The situation assignment should be of some value in training pupils to meet real life situations, because of a similarity of approach. To fulfill a situation assignment requires the ability to associate or dissociate the details given in the assignment; to understand or to meet a situation in real life requires this same ability to associate or dissociate the circumstances of the situation as they present themselves to the mind.
Problem: To determine whether children in Grade Five can gain in the use of descriptive words after specific teaching.

Materials: A set of fifteen exercises constructed by the author to stimulate the use of colorful vocabulary.

Procedure: 1. Ninety-six children from the fifth grade, forty in the control group and fifty-six in the experimental group participated.

2. Two pretests were made and administered to both groups. In the first, the children were asked to write down as many colorful words as they could. By colorful was meant words which you feel, smell, hear, and see. Four minutes were allowed. For the other pretest, ten minutes were allowed for the children to write down what they could see in a picture which was made visible to the whole class.

3. A set of fifteen exercises was constructed and used with the experimental group to stimulate thinking and the use of descriptive words and phrases. These took about twenty minute periods.

4. The control group followed their regular language arts program.

5. Final tests were administered at the conclusion of the special teaching.
Major Findings and Conclusions:

1. The difference in gain in the results of the written response to a two minute stimulus was 9.96% in favor of the control group and was not statistically significant.

2. With the picture stimulus the results favored the experimental group but were not statistically significant differences.

3. The results of the responses to the combined stimuli were statistically significant in favor of the experimental group.

**Problem:** To determine the type and number of opportunities given for oral language in the fourth grade through analysis of ten language textbooks.

**Related Problems:**

1. To determine the activities and page placement of opportunities to use those activities in each textbook.
2. To determine total number of opportunities to use each activity in each textbook considered.
3. To determine total number of opportunities to use each activity in all ten textbooks considered.
4. To determine total number of opportunities for use of all activities presented in the study.
5. To compare number of opportunities presented in each textbook.

**Materials Used:**

2. *Language Arts.* Trabue; Goodrich. Merrill, 1941.
3. *We Talk and Write.* O'Rourke. Scott, Foresman, 1942.

Boston University School of Education Library

Procedure: Each text carefully examined to discover kinds of
activities offered to fourth grade pupils in oral language.

Following items selected as basis of analysis.

Individual Activities: (activities which would be given by
one pupil after reading, discussion or explanation)
1. Announcements
2. Descriptions
3. Explanations
4. Giving Directions
5. Messages
6. Personal Experiences
7. Telling Stories

Individual-Group Activities: (activities which a committee or
group of children work upon with one child giving oral talk)
1. Reports
2. Summaries

Group Activities (activities in which more than one child
will speak orally)
1. Dramatizations
2. Discussions
3. Introductions
4. Telephone Conversations

Summary and Conclusions: Textbooks vary widely in their provision
for training children in oral expression.
1. There are 1,923 opportunities to use oral language in the ten textbooks examined, or an average of 192.3 per book.

2. The book *Gaining Skill with Words* has the greatest number of opportunities with 326.

3. The book *Learning Essential English* has the least number of opportunities with 94.

4. There were marked differences in emphasis of different types of oral language activities, with only 21 opportunities for oral summaries as compared to 354 for telling stories.

**Problem:** To develop and evaluate a method for enriching the writing vocabulary of children at the seventh grade level and to determine the amount of transfer into written composition.

**Materials:**
1. Pintner General Ability Test, Verbal Series.
2. Reading section of the Metropolitan Achievement Test (Revised) Advanced Battery.
3. Inglis Test of English Vocabulary.
4. *The Teachers' Word Book of 30,000 Words* by Thorndike.

**Procedure:** The experiment was conducted with 64 seventh grade children controlled by an equated group of the same number. Experimental group was taught units on capitalization, punctuation, and usage, the same as the control group, the teaching differing only in the area of literature. Control group spent greater part of time reading *Treasure Island*. Experimental group was taught 26 consecutive lessons called "Painting Word Pictures" for 20-30 minutes daily. These consisted of planned lessons in vocabulary enrichment through literary models, pictures, and experiences, with special measures on sensory training and leisure reading with the words used in context. Some activities engaged in were keeping individual notebooks, word-a-day charts, written and oral reports and
Conclusions: Both groups showed gains in the number of descriptive words used, the experimental group making significant gains. Experimental group made significant gains on the Inglis Vocabulary Test. Both bright and dull children gained significantly in the use of descriptive words. No sex differences were indicated in the study.

**Problem:** To gather a list of words from eighth grade pupils who are retarded readers and to evaluate the results of teaching this specialized vocabulary.

**Materials Used:**
1. Iowa Every-Pupil Tests of Basic Skills, Form O.
2. California Short-Form Tests of Mental Maturity, Intermediate, S Form.

**Procedure:** Specialized vocabulary was gathered by a selected group of retarded pupils in reading from their textbooks, source materials, lectures, etc. Pupils were told to list at the time the word was met, any word that was unknown, puzzling, or a word that seemed to have some sort of special meaning as used in context. Control and experimental groups of equated number were used in the study. Experimental group was taught words in special study groups in social and science studies. Otherwise both groups went to regular classes. Both groups studied by means of psychological and educational tests.

**Findings and Conclusions:** Summary of the Iowa Testing: There was a difference of .4 at the median point in favor of the experimental group in the June tests. The experimental group had 16 pupils gaining two years or more from October to June. The control group had eight pupils gaining two years or more. By June, in the experimental group, 70% had scores of grade eight,
or better, on the Vocabulary Word Meaning section of the Traxler test. By June, 24% of the control group had scores of grade eight or better. It would appear that the general as well as the technical vocabulary was better in the experimental than in the control group.

Informal Testing: 86% of the experimental group mastered 80% of the terms used. Only one pupil in the control group made a score of 80% or better. In the science tests given after each lesson had been taught to the experimental group, 80% of the pupils had mastered 80% of the words after four lessons.

It appeared that the experimental group had achieved a mastery of a technical vocabulary used in American history to a point of 78% efficiency, which is not far from the experimenter's goal of making the experimental group at least 80% efficient in the vocabulary that has been used. It was concluded that schools should recognize the fact that failure for the sensitive, intelligent, well-meaning child is a serious matter, and that ways should be planned to teach that special group. It would appear that those pupils can master vocabularies, thoroughly taught, and put into meaningful context.

**Problem:** To determine the written composition interests of children in grades five and six suggested by five language series.

**Materials Used:** Five leading language series in grades five and six as suggested by Macmillan, Row-Patterson, Ginn, Houghton Mifflin, and D. C. Heath.

**Procedure:** Children in the fifth and sixth grades were asked to check a questionnaire regarding their preferences in written composition. The questionnaire consisted of four forms, each of which consisted of 24 topics and one type of letter - business or friendly. The topics were arranged in this order: a personal experience, an emotionalized title, a humorous situation, a look up and tell item, and a making and doing things item. Each form which was given was spaced a week apart. Interpretations were drawn.

**Conclusions:** 1. The per cent for preferences of 185 pupils ranged from 31.98% to 83.36%. The five most preferred topics were: "A Hallowe'en Joke", "How I Learned to Swim", "A Birthday Surprise", "No More School on Wednesdays", "If I Had a Million Dollars".

"If I Had a Million Dollars".

3. Girls preferred these titles: "A Hallowe'en Joke", "A Birthday Surprise", "How I Learned to Swim", "My First Experience on Skates", "A Joke on Me". The percentage range was from 30.81% to 90.84%.

4. Of the 82 pupils in grade five, the per cent for preferences ranged from 27.50% to 88.65%.

5. Of the 103 pupils in grade six the per cent for preferences ranged from 35.85% to 83.75%.

6. Children preferred the friendly letter over the business letter. The C.R. was 1.5685 which is not statistically significant.

7. A significant sex difference in the favor of the girls was found in the appeal of friendly letters as a type of assignment. The C.R. was 3.4286.
Problem: To develop and evaluate a series of exercises in composition planning to see whether those children having training in outlining for composition writing do better compositions than those not receiving training.

Materials: 1. Pintner General Ability Tests, Form K.
2. Iowa Basic Language Tests, Test C. Advanced Form L.
3. A set of exercises in composition writing, with initial and final tests, made by the author.

Procedure: 1. Seven eighth grade classes in one city were given Pintner General Ability Tests and Iowa Basic Language Tests. Three of these classes were used as the experimental group.
   2. An initial test was administered.
   3. A set of exercises covering four main topics, subdivided into three units each, was developed and used by the experimental group. In the first topic they developed the first unit under the teacher's direction, using thought-provoking questions to develop the outline. For the second unit the children worked in groups of three and developed their own outlines. For the third unit each pupil wrote his own composition without an outline. Each topic was similarly developed.
   4. A final test was administered.
   5. The control group was given topics and told to write compositions, with no planning, discussion, or help from the teacher.
**Major Findings and Conclusions:**

1. On the initial test, the means for the two groups showed a statistically significant difference in favor of the control group.

2. On the final test the means of the two groups showed a statistically significant difference in favor of the experimental group.

3. Comparison of the initial and final tests of the experimental group showed a statistically significant difference in favor of the final test.

4. The control group did more poorly on the final test than on the initial, showing a significant difference in favor of the initial test.

5. The gains in ideas showed a significant difference in favor of the experimental group.
Wilcox, Glenn W. Student Preferences for Written Composition Topics and Assignments in the Ninth Grade. Ed.M. 1947. 50p.

Problem: To determine what topics children of Grade Nine liked to write about and what kinds of assignments they liked.

Materials: A questionnaire in two parts: Part One, 200 items to show the extent and variation of interests; Part Two, eight sections of six assignments each to indicate preference for the following types of assignments: letter, report, outline, article, original composition, and explanation.

Procedure: 1. The questionnaire was developed.

2. One teacher administered it to an unselected group of 69 girls and 86 boys of Grade Nine of a metropolitan high school.

Major Findings and Conclusions: 1. The areas of interest of greatest preference for boys were: sports and out-of-door activities, travel and adventure, radio and movies, flying and airplanes, honor and fair play, and health.

2. The areas of interest of greatest preference for the girls were: success and pleasures, friends and friendships, radio personalities, movies and movie stars, sports and out-of-door activities, travel and adventure, dances and dancing, cooking, honor and fair play, self-improvement, and manners.
3. The assignments were preferred in the following order: letter, report, original composition, article, explanation, and outline. There was a significant difference between the letter and the outline.

4. Friendly letters were preferred over the social and business letters; book reports over magazine articles and committee reports; and stories over poems and plays.