A Curriculum Sequence in Modern Grammars for English Teachers

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The field of English education has been vigorously productive of new knowledge since well before the occurrence of Sputnik I. Beginning in the late 1940’s, English scholars have started developing modern grammars which consist of new conceptualizations that potentially revolutionize the teaching of grammar in American high schools and colleges. In contrast to the development of new knowledge in other fields, especially in the sciences, these modern grammars evolved as a matter of concern for English scholars and not for teachers of English in the secondary schools. This characteristic of new knowledge in grammar means that the development of modern grammars is evolutionary rather than revolutionary. Also, it means that since the new knowledge is now established, the next phase in the evolution of modern grammars must be the education of teachers of English in modern grammars and the introduction of modern grammars into the curriculum of secondary schools. The present article is limited to one of the problems involved in the education of future teachers of grammar and in the reeducation of those who are already in the field.

All thinking in this area is influenced by the fact that traditional grammar is firmly established in both the teacher education curriculum of higher institutions and in the curriculum of the secondary schools. Hence, in introducing modern grammar into the curriculum for the preparation of English teachers in colleges and universities, several important questions must be considered. Should traditional grammar continue to be taught? How many systems of grammar should English teachers know? In the case of teachers already prepared to teach traditional grammar, what system of grammar should they learn next? In the case of future English teachers, should they first learn a modern grammar and then traditional grammar, or vice versa? If all English teachers learn traditional grammar, which of the modern grammars is most appropriate to be learned next? To the first question, existing conditions provide at least a practical answer. Since English teachers in the schools today know mainly traditional grammar and since the curriculum of the secondary schools provides mainly for traditional grammar, it will be necessary to continue teaching traditional grammar to future teachers for some time to come. A reliable answer is provided for the second question by a consensus of opinion of the leadership in English education. The consensus is that a good English teacher in secondary schools should know at least two systems of grammar, and a superior English teacher should have “sufficient knowledge to illustrate richly and specifically the detailed knowledge he has of the two systems.”

1The Illinois State-wide Curriculum Center for Preparation of Secondary School Teach-

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Answers to the three other questions are so far not available, either from practical administrative considerations or from a consensus of authoritative opinions. An element which all three have in common is that they are variations of the basic issue of sequence in the study of modern grammars by English teachers. Consequently, an answer to all three of them can be found by establishing some principle for a sequential curriculum in the study of grammars. Accordingly, it is the argument of the present article that such a principle exists in the continuum from deductive to inductive thinking which is inherent in the nature of thinking processes involved in the various grammars. From this viewpoint, the various grammars occupy different positions on the continuum from fully deductive to completely inductive thinking. The principle herein advanced means that an effective curriculum sequence in the study of grammars by English teachers is to begin with the traditional grammar, which is fully deductive in its thinking, and to proceed successively to modern grammars, which are progressively more empirical and more inductive in their thinking.

In order to demonstrate the validity of this principle, it is obviously necessary to describe briefly some of the representative modern grammars. The following paragraphs are an attempt to make such descriptions to the extent that is needed to confirm the hypothesis stated above, but no claim is made that these descriptions constitute an exhaustive analysis of modern grammars.

Traditional grammar basically utilizes deductive thinking processes. It uses meaning as a basis for arriving at classifications and formulas. From these basic conceptualizations, it proceeds to analyze sentences. Traditional grammar approaches "language as a tool of thought." It assumes that "language is a reflection of thought," and that grammar consists of the "laws of language." It is normative and prescriptive in its content, and it legislates how native speakers of English ought to use the language. These mental processes in traditional grammar are illustrated by the usual manner of teaching sentences. In the traditional approach to the grammatical analysis of sentences, one first determines the total meaning of the utterance before beginning the analysis, and the subsequent process of analysis "consists almost wholly of giving technical names to portions of this total meaning."

Obviously, the order of thinking in traditional grammar is from the general to the particular, and this grammar occupies a position near the completely deductive pole on the continuum from deductive to inductive thinking.

Transformational grammar employs a greater share of both deductive and inductive thinking. Undoubtedly a most distinctive element of inductive thought inherent in transformational grammar is the unifying of grammatical

3Ibid., p. 20.
5Ibid., p. 3.
6Ibid., p. 54.
phenomena involving sentences into the concept of the transformation of the kernel sentence, which concept is also applied to changes in words. The attainment of such singleness in explaining cause and effect among phenomena is genuinely scientific thinking; traditional grammar has nothing approaching it. The concept of the transform is a key to such a wide range of grammatical phenomena that it constitutes a structure for English grammar in the terms of the new conceptual theories of curriculum.

On the other hand, in teaching the specifics of grammar involved in the transformations of words, groups of words, and sentences, transformational grammar retains much of the content that is used in traditional grammar. The terminology is predominantly the same. Moreover, the classifications and curricular organization of traditional grammar are found also in transformational grammar. Most importantly from the viewpoint of this article, the basic processes of thought in transformational grammar are largely as deductive as they are in traditional grammar. For instance, from the very outset in a book on sentences, one of the proponents of transformational grammar defines grammar as "a set of rules for making English sentences," although the distinction must be kept in mind that Roberts would not define "rules" as the traditionalists do. The rules of Roberts are phrase-structure rules and transformational rules, as developed by Chomsky. They are descriptions of the way sentences are put together. Nevertheless, the set-of-rules way of thinking is also utilized in traditional grammar, and it is basically deductive.

It appears clearly, therefore, that some aspects of transformational grammar involve thought processes that are more "scientific" than traditional grammar. Sentence patterns are arrived at mainly by observation and induction in the transformational approach, whereas they are arrived at by logic and intuition in the traditional approach. Transformational grammar "generalizes" grammatical phenomena through use of the concept of the transform, whereas traditional grammar permits them to proliferate as discrete entities. On the whole, however, the gap between these two grammars on the continuum from deductive to inductive thinking is not too great. The size of the gap supports the conclusion that transformational grammar should be established as the sequel to traditional grammar in a curriculum sequence of grammars for English teachers.

Another type of modern grammar is that represented by the work of W. Nelson Francis. This modern grammar is permeated with liberal amounts of phonology and morphology which are intrinsic to the grammatical topics. The linguistic content, however, is not the main determiner of his treatment of grammar. A more significant aspect is his concern with syntactic structure as a key to a science of grammar. Hence, this grammar is referred to by Francis himself as structural grammar.

Characteristic of this modern grammar is its utilization of scientific thought procedures by deliberate design. W. Nelson Francis outlines the scientific thought processes implemented in his study of the science of grammar as at-

tention to a coherent body of facts, careful objective descriptions, making generalizations, making predictions, and stating laws. These processes are fully implemented in his work. He progresses from forms to meaning, and the process includes collecting adequate samples of speech, objective examination and analysis of the samples, arriving at generalizations concerning the devices and patterns of their structure, and stating these generalizations in such forms as rules, lists, charts, or diagrams. This approach "is directly opposite to that of the traditional prescientific grammarian, who used meaning as a basis for his classifications and formulas." Implementing the scientific approach, Francis organizes grammatical phenomena around the single basic concept of structure, i.e., "the organizing of morphemes and words into larger meaningful utterances." Further, the phenomena of structural grammar are explained by five conceptualizations: word order, prosody, function words, inflections, and derivational contrast. Thus, the field of grammar is practically unified by a few basic concepts arrived at by scientific thinking.

But, for the further elaboration of grammatical knowledge, Francis reverts extensively to traditional terminology and traditional thought processes. Below the level of classifications and formulas, parts of speech and parts of sentences are presented through the technique of define-elaborate-illustrate as in traditional grammar.

Generally speaking, however, the structural grammar as it is represented by Francis is located further in the direction of the inductive pole than is transformational grammar on the continuum from deductive to inductive thought. Furthermore, the gap along this continuum between the grammars of Francis and Roberts is greater than the gap between Roberts and traditional grammar. Structural grammar of the Francis variety is considerably more inductive than it is deductive.

Finally, there is another variety of structural grammar which is involved wholly with inductive thought processes. Hence, it may be called "inductive" structural grammar to distinguish it from the structural grammar of Francis. Representative of this modern grammar is the work of Charles C. Fries. His concept of grammar is that it "consists of the devices that signal structural meanings—the patterns of form and arrangement of words." Such signals are the structure of language, and grammatical knowledge is organized around this concept of structure.

Using a sample of fifty hours of English speech recorded in a university community, Fries proceeds to a thoroughly empirical description of language phenomena. Parts of speech are organized into four classes numbered 1 to 4 and eleven groups of words which are lettered A to K. Sentences are classified into patterns of situation utterances and sequence utterances. Formulas utilizing number and letter symbols are developed to express patterns of word orders.

9 Ibid., p. 226.
10 Ibid., p. 223.
11 Ibid., pp. 229-234.
12 Fries, The Structure of English, p. 56.
The gap between traditional grammar and the grammar of Fries is widened to the extent that quotation marks are used by him whenever traditional terminology is used, such as "subjects" and "objects." It is obvious that inductive structural grammar must be placed near the opposite pole from traditional grammar on the deductive-inductive continuum.

The burden of the previous pages has been to provide evidence that a spectrum from deductive to inductive knowledge already exists in the field of modern grammars. As a corollary, however, the principle of a progression of knowledge between the two poles of intellectual processes has greater generalizability for curriculum theory in higher education. The concept is applicable in all the fields of knowledge. For the fields in the province of the humanities, it is possible to begin at the intuitive end of the thinking processes, with which the humanities are familiar, and lead students through studies in the same field to the inductive end, with which the humanities are not familiar. For the fields of knowledge in the province of the sciences, the progression would occur in the opposite direction. Thus a common factor would be provided for all knowledge by utilizing the range of possible mental processes in each field of knowledge individually. The graduates of such a curriculum would be, on the one hand, humanists who have important competencies of the scientist and, on the other hand, scientists who have important competencies of the humanist. Since the union of mental processes characteristic of both the humanities and the sciences would be accomplished in each of the fields of study, this new type of curriculum could be known as the "intra-disciplinary" curriculum. It would be intra-disciplinary in terms of knowledge as process just as the "inter-disciplinary" curriculum of the past has been inter-disciplinary in terms of knowledge as product.

From several viewpoints, modern grammars are in the mainstream of the contemporary curriculum development movement. Since 1960, curriculum theory has emphasized conceptual learning and has enunciated the companion doctrines of structuring the concepts and identifying the processes of a field of knowledge. Hence, new knowledge in grammar compares favorably with new knowledge in other fields in the light of curriculum theory. Surprisingly enough, this avant-garde quality is not recognized and publicized as much for structures and processes of modern grammar as for other fields in the "curriculum" literature. Whereas recent pedagogical curriculum publications report extensively the developments of structure and process in other disciplines, similar achievements in linguistics remain relatively unpublicized. One has to read the works of the scientific grammarians themselves to realize their significance fully.

Two explanations may account for this discrepancy. The first is historical. Structures and processes evolved in the field of grammar in the late 1940's and 1950's, thus predating the structure and process approach in curriculum theory which appeared only in the early 1960's. Hence, possibly the relevance of the modern grammars to new curriculum theory was obscured. A second

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explanation may be the lack of concern on the part of linguistic scholars to implement their findings in the curriculum of the secondary schools. Professional curriculum people are especially aware of new knowledge as it affects instruction in the schools, and therefore they may have neglected new knowledge which admittedly was of concern almost exclusively to the profession of English. Whatever the reason may be, the important fact remains that it is now more than time to introduce linguistics into the schools in the form of textbooks and instructional materials. A crash program for producing English linguistic teaching materials similar to the large-scale curriculum projects in the sciences and mathematics is definitely in order.

On the other hand, from the viewpoint of the teachers of English, numerous institutes have already devoted much attention to modern grammars, but several times as many are needed. Since English teachers are the most numerous category of secondary school teachers, the task of preparing them through in-service programs presents a very great challenge.

Important decisions relative to organization and sequence for studying and teaching modern grammars must be made. The present article has advanced and defended one approach in curriculum sequence for teaching modern grammars to English teachers. There are sound reasons for teaching these grammars beginning with transformational grammar, followed by structural, and concluding with inductive structural grammar as those modern grammars are exemplified in the works of Paul Roberts, W. Nelson Francis, and Charles Carpenter Fries respectively. The learning challenge in this grammatical sequence is to master progressively more empirical and inductive methods of thinking. Since English teachers are steeped in the deductive, intuitive processes of traditional grammar, introducing them to modern grammars on a progressively more inductive continuum appears to be the most effective curriculum sequence for ushering them into the new world of scientific grammar.