THE EFFECTS OF TWO DIFFERENT ENGLISH PROGRAMS ON
FIRST GRADE CHILDREN'S ORAL COMPOSITIONS

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in

Education

by

Carol Humble Carichner

July, 1975
The thesis of Carol Humble Carichner is approved:

________________________________________
Committee Chairman

California State University, Northridge
July, 1975
To my Mother
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people have helped with the preparation of this thesis. I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Raymond Jung, my Committee Chairman, Dr. Sue Wasserman and Dr. Vicki Sharp for their invaluable guidance.

My thanks to Mr. Bernard Holding, Principal, and Mr. Joseph Bethel, Assistant Principal of Coldwater Canyon Elementary School. This study could not have been undertaken without the cooperation of Mrs. Marcia Schacter, first grade teacher at the same school. Her constant support is greatly appreciated. Miss Christina Palmer kindly donated her time to listen to the transcriptions. Mary McCullum was an excellent and efficient typist.

Finally, I am most grateful and indebted to Petra Jacobsson Montante for encouraging me to begin the study and providing unlimited assistance.
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ABSTRACT

THE EFFECTS OF TWO DIFFERENT ENGLISH PROGRAMS ON FIRST GRADE CHILDREN'S ORAL COMPOSITIONS

by

Carol Humble Carichner

Master of Arts in Education

July, 1975

This study was concerned with the use of a literature-based approach as a basis for a language and composition program. A program which was linguistically oriented and focused on the individual's experience with the literary work itself was compared with a more traditional textbook approach. The investigator was concerned with the development of a firm foundation in oral expression in first grade children who were just beginning the school experience and learning to read and write. An experiment was undertaken to determine which type of program would contribute most significantly to the children's growth in oral composition.

From a thorough review of the research, the literature program was found to be effective in achieving gains in reading skills, written composition, and other measures of language flexibility. Methods for analyzing syntactic
growth were reviewed, and the T-unit emerged as a reliable and easily administered index of such growth. Length of T-unit was found to increase from grade to grade. Length of composition also showed a developmental trend. Writers and researchers in the field recommended dictation as the most practical mode of composition for children of this age. Studies in language development disclosed that special treatments may augment the syntactic maturity of older students. However, kindergarten and primary children do not reproduce structures which are beyond their cognitive capabilities. The question posed was, "Can the use of a literature program which included language explorations and extensive composition experiences enable first graders to grow optimally in length and maturity of expression?"

The procedures were designed so that two comparable first grade classroom groups each experienced a different English program. The experimental group used a literature-based program, while the control group used a textbook-workbook method of instruction. Oral compositions were analyzed before and after a five month treatment period. Length of T-unit and length of composition were measured and the t test was used for statistical analysis. No significant differences between the two groups were found on the first measure. In length of composition, the experimental group showed growth significant at the .001 level of confidence.
An English program which employs literature as a foundation was found to improve facility in creative storytelling, but did not advance the children's syntactic maturity.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

The development of language proficiency for all children is a goal of language arts education in today's elementary schools. An effective language program, then, would need to account for the findings of research into the development of language skills. These findings were summarized by Thompson (1967) when she concluded that (1) the development of skills in language is closely related to age, intelligence, and economic background, and (2) reading, writing, listening and speaking show a positive relationship. The latter statement is supported by Shire (1945), Loban (1963) and Ruddell (1966).

Facility in oral language has been viewed as a prerequisite to acquiring other language skills by many writers. That reading and writing instruction should be preceded by a wealth of oral experiences to develop competency in spoken language was expressed by Loban (1963), Wasserman (1967), Stryker (1967) and Strickland (1962, 1969). Formal instruction in grammar has not been effective in improving expression (Braddock, 1963; Loban, 1963). Direct grammar instruction has likewise had no effect on the student's written
language (Meckel, 1963; Mellon, 1969). The oral language that children use is structurally more advanced than that found in their reading books (Strickland, 1962). Strang and Hocker (1965) conclude that children need to get a feeling for language by reading appropriate literature at each level of development if they are to outgrow their own primitive expression. If teachers are to help children read and write the same language they already speak and understand, then controlled materials may not provide sufficient breadth and linguistic variety. Early work in oral and written composition will provide opportunity to examine the child's syntax. As Loban (1963) demonstrated, poor language skills are less related to intelligence than environment, and an investigation of syntax should, therefore, begin early, before sentence patterns of the home environment become frozen.

Statement of the Problem

The problem in this study was to ascertain the effects of two different programs of language instruction on first grade children's oral syntactic maturity and fluency in oral dictation.

Concerning the choice of a language program, the following problem was posed: Would the use of A Curriculum for English (University of Nebraska Curriculum Development Center) yield any significant differences in the development of children's oral composition when compared with the use of
the California State-Adopted Ginn Elementary English series?

The use of literature as a foundation for the teaching of English should not be confused with a reading curriculum or program. In *A Curriculum for English*, oral reading by the teacher is the first step in the development of each unit, followed by story analysis and further activities. Literature becomes the springboard for acquainting pupils with basic grammatical patterns, rhythm patterns in oral reading, phonology, expansion of sentences, substitution and transformations. The increasing control of structure may then enable the child to apply these structures to his own speaking, and of course, writing. Moreover, with increased syntactic fluency, the child may better command the vocabulary he has gained in his listening, reading, dramatic and related experiences. The study of literature itself acquaints children with the conventions of literature, the types of literature, characterization, elaboration of a theme, plot, sequence and forming conclusions. The Nebraska Curriculum encompasses such skills as interpretation of time and mood, knowledge of nuances and the author's intent, making generalizations, stating main ideas and details, and judging experience against a standard. The first grade curriculum presents only the rudiments of transformational grammar exercises, and emphasizes oral or dictation work with pupils as opposed to assigned writing tasks.

The Ginn program likewise omits any study of grammar. The composition program begins with oral discussion, then
the independent writing of stories using suggested topics and vocabulary lists.

Limitation of the Problem

This study was limited to two first grade classrooms in a suburban school of Los Angeles County. The children were from lower middle class homes, with a few exceptions.

The independent variables were the two methodologies to be employed from January to June, 1975. The experimental group used the Nebraska Curriculum for English and the control group used the Ginn Elementary English textbook.

The first dependent variable in this study was the pupil's mean T-unit score obtained from an oral (dictated) composition.

The second was length of composition, obtained by counting the total number of words spoken.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

There will be no significant difference at the .05 level of confidence on the composition posttest between the experimental group and the control group in syntactic maturity.

Hypothesis 2

There will be no significant difference at the .05 level of confidence between the experimental and the control group in mean length of composition.
Rationale

Two notions support the undertaking of this study. The first involves the development of syntactic maturity. The second contrasts a literature approach and a workbook method as methods of teaching English.

That primary school children are capable of absorbing instruction in syntax has been established by Bergh (1965), Menyuk (1969), Bandura and Harris (1966) and Endo (1974). The research of Chomsky (1969) demonstrated that active syntactic learning still occurs at age nine and beyond. The studies of O'Donnell, Griffin and Norris (1967), Ruddell and Graves (1968) and Hunt (1968) support the need for further research into the field of treatments to enhance syntactic growth. So far there is scant evidence as to whether or not instruction in structural grammar can lead to improve speaking and writing. May suggests that "It is conceivable that the study of kernel sentences and various ways they can be transformed will increase fluency and flexibility of children's oral and written expression" (1967:83).

One premise of the Nebraska curriculum is that the desire to read, understanding of one's native language, and competence in composition develop from a continuing exposure to literature of fine quality. Pupils would then manipulate linguistic and literary conventions in their own writing. This approach is supported by Martin (1968), who proposes
that the child's language should be "lifted" by exposure to a continuous parade of tales read aloud and similar language experiences. Likewise, Moffett (1968) recommends the use of folk literature and poetry as "input" material, so that children will absorb images and ideas they can recombine in their own expression. Moffett suggests curriculum activities for narration which include writing monologs, letters, diaries, and biographies. He rejects the position that communication skills will be improved by instruction in grammar.

Several recent studies have confirmed the success of literature-based programs in producing linguistic gains. D. Strickland (1971), Cohen (1966), Bailey (1971), Fisher (1972) and the authors of the Reading Development Project Report, Los Angeles County Schools (ESEA Title III, 1974), have tested methods for improving the language and reading skills of kindergarten and primary school pupils. The Reading Development Project Report concludes:

The use of predictable patterns in literary models provides the learner with syntactical, morphological, and phonological cues enabling him to obtain meaning from the semantic environment and thus, to develop strategies for handling unfamiliar structures and words. (1974:21)

This study attempted to test "the assumption that children can or need to assimilate into their own writing the level of competency and style which is present in the literature they enjoy" (Odland, 1969:38).
Definition of Terms

**T-unit**
Hunt coined this term, which stands for "minimal terminal syntactic unit." It is "a main clause plus any subordinate clause or non-clausal structure that is attached to or embedded within it" (1965:4). It is equivalent to a simple or complex sentence. However, a compound sentence is composed of two or more T-units.

**Syntactic Maturity**

**t Test**
As defined by Ary, et al., it is "the index used to find the significance of the difference between the means of two samples drawn independently from a population" (1972: 138).

**Oral Composition**
An original story created by a pupil in response to a set of instructions. It is dictated to a teacher, who acts as a scribe or records the words on tape for later transcription. The teacher (or other adult) takes the material down exactly as given and assumes responsibility for arranging it into units and adding punctuation.
Speech Garbles

Sometimes called "mazes," these are false starts, hesitations, repetitions and other extraneous words recorded during children's dictating experiences. In this study, garbles were noted but were not counted in word totals. Examples are "well," "and uh."

Fluency

The quality of speaking easily, smoothly, and expressively. At the same time, the speaker's ideas are clear and coherent. Getting expression to flow smoothly was seen by Beverley as "a task requiring concentration and conscious effort on the part of the child" (1925:360). Fluency seems to develop as literary conventions are synthesized into children's speech.

Summary

In this chapter, the purposes of the study are examined. It is stated in the hypotheses that no significant differences in syntactic maturity and length of composition will be evidenced on posttest between groups instructed using A Curriculum for English (University of Nebraska Curriculum Development Center) and the Ginn Elementary English Series. Some reasons for selecting a literature-based English program are discussed. The need for the development of oral language and composition skills is also reviewed. The T-unit is presented as a means of
measuring children's syntactic growth. In the following chapter, a review of the literature related to this study is undertaken.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The Literature Approach and the Teaching of English

Many writers have emphasized the need for a well-planned, balanced literature program with definite purposes. When some current practices in the teaching of literature are evaluated, the need for a spiral curriculum to build upon the basic elements, outside of a regular reading program, emerges.

The Role of a Literature Program

In the conventional elementary school, only a small percentage of time is devoted to literature teaching, and there is general agreement that the study of literature is too nonanalytic and informal (Squire, 1969; Deighton, 1971; Blount, 1973). Odland (1969) gives an overview of curriculum guides, concluding that "very little attention is paid to what literature is, when to teach it, or what procedures will establish the nebulous 'attitudes and values'" (1969: 13). If the study of literature is combined with the study of language and composition, Odland points out, certain strengths can be recognized. Students can observe, as
models, interesting and well-written pieces of literature. She cites a need for an organized curriculum, more reading aloud to children, and adequate teacher preparation. Jenkins expressed the view that "literature and reading are separate and unequal in elementary schools" (1964:780). In other words, the application of reading skills to literature, to broaden, refine, and reinforce reading does not take place. Huck (1962) states that we have no literature program in the elementary school compared to carefully planned, developmental programs in reading, spelling and arithmetic. Referring to Bruner's notion that a child ought to be introduced to myths, classics, and so forth, at the earliest possible age, Huck urges that a curriculum identify the concepts to be taught to children. Constant exposure to fine writing would then be reflected in children's increased skill in their own oral and written expression.

Squire (1969) recognized the need for new elementary programs. He cited the Nebraska Curriculum as a promising, influential beginning, focusing as it does on the structure of literature and the reading of legends and folktales. Allen and Seaberg (1965) also examined new English projects developed by the United States Office of Education grants in 1967. The new curricula, they suggest, may push the child too quickly into the structural study of literature. They would immerse children first in poetry, then folklore and fantasy, and finally samplings from a range of literary genre. The following pertinent observations are presented
from a National Defense Education Act Institute in Children's Literature at Brooklyn College:

1. Most children respond enthusiastically to poetry and rhythmical prose.
2. Folk literature and fantastical fiction appeal most to the urban child.
3. The urban child needs realistic fiction that is very close to his own experiences.
4. Story selection is critical.
5. There should be an intermediate step in which youngsters participate actively and expressively in response to a literary work.
6. Children must encounter good literature in a meaningful and organized way. (1968:1044)

In contrast to this child-centered view is the emphasis by Purves (1968) on the literary work itself. His four categories of response are engagement, perception, interpretation and evaluation. These are presented as being latent in every student, even in the elementary school. The instructor may weave any number of lessons or units from the connections the work and the individual have with each other, the author, the domain of literature, and the individual's world. Purves eschews such terms as "appreciation," "understanding our literary heritage" and "developing critical standards and attitudes." Some writers feel that his ideas may be too advanced for elementary school children. As Odland aptly comments, "Purves' schemes for writing about a literary work may be too complicated to be applicable to the elementary school" (1969:71).

The significance of oral experiences in literature in expanding the repertoire of disadvantaged children was noted by R. Strickland (1962). Loban (1968) believes that
A literature program should be designed to balance the numerous elements and advance learner's skills in reading, listening, speaking and writing. Literature may also function, in Loban's view, to feed and develop the imagination. Martin (1965) explores the relationship between three levels of children's language and literature's function in the classroom. Through the "life-lifting language" of books, he believes language can be a bridge from the child's world into the lives of other people. Moffett (1960), on the other hand, sees folk literature and poetry as "impersonal forms into which children can project feeling without knowing that they are doing so" (1968:113). As children internalize the rhymes, rhythms and other formal patterns, they are absorbing in an effective way the vocabulary, locutions and language structures by association. Moffett favors imitating forms, borrowing content and reading orally. The California Framework Committee (1968) emphasizes the need for oral experience and dramatization with young children, as well as the experience of creating works of imaginative literature. Through speech and writing the child can develop a more total response to effective expression in language. It may also help him to prepare for reading independently with a real feeling for what literature is.

A carefully planned literature program, then, is regarded as a vital part of the elementary school curriculum. Some of the assets of such programs have been more formally assessed in the classroom.
Within the last decade, researchers have tested the effectiveness of the literature approach in developing language skills. None of the studies mentioned below made use of published or commercially available programs comparable to materials assembled in reading and English textbook series.

In a pioneer study by Cohen (1966), twenty second grade classes were matched from homogeneous groups of inner-city children. All classes were taught reading by the basal series and used the standard curriculum. The experimental variable was storytelling. Each experimental group was given fifty books at three levels of difficulty based on length of story and complexity of plot and language. Each teacher read from these every day and allowed children free access to them. Easiest books were read first. All pupils were given the Metropolitan Achievement Test, Upper Primary, in October and June. The experimental group showed an increase over the control group in: (a) vocabulary ($p < .005$); (b) word knowledge ($p < .005$), and (c) reading comprehension ($p < .01$). Regular story listening to the books chosen aided in facility of listening, attention span, narrative sense and recognition of learned words in other contexts. Cohen concluded that the relationship between oral language and reading had been confirmed. Children had a pleasant experience with books, were motivated to read,
assimilated vocabulary, and were exposed to other language models.

A similar special program of literature and related language activities was created by D. Strickland (1971) for use with low socioeconomic status Negro kindergarten children. There were fifteen subjects in each of four experimental groups and four control groups. The experimental program was a literature-based one with daily reading aloud and a follow-up oral language activity. The control group heard daily reading aloud followed by a placebo activity. As in Cohen's study, each classroom used the same fifty books selected by strict criteria. All teachers attended workshops on children's literature and received handbooks of suggestions for activities. Experimental teachers received additional training. The only posttest result which favored the experimental group was a standard repetitions section of the Educational Study Center Bidialectical Task for Determining Language Proficiency. The experimental children showed a higher degree of flexibility in language, significant at the .01 level of confidence. They were also felt to have expanded their repertoire of standard English.

Bailey (1971) sought to determine whether or not participation in the activities of a library resource program would improve the psycholinguistic abilities of a group of disadvantaged first grade pupils from an urban community. Two control groups were selected: twenty-five children from the lower status area and another twenty-five from a higher
socioeconomic area of the same city. Selected activities using children's books and storytelling devices were organized to form a program which lasted for twelve weeks, one hour a day. The entire battery of the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities was given individually before and after the treatment period. Disadvantaged children in the library resource program significantly increased their total language ability. The experimental group showed most significant gains in expressing ideas. On a test of ability to understand spoken words, the non-disadvantaged control group showed a gain significantly greater than the other two groups.

Middle class children in grades kindergarten, 1 and 2 participated in three twelve-week programs in a project by Fisher (1972). Assignment to treatments was random. Twelve undergraduate students in education worked in pairs with one class in the literature program and one class in the sharing-discussion program at the same grade level. There was also a no-treatment control group at each grade level. Leaders participated in a seminar activity to plan activities for both programs. On the two posttests, Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test and Linguistic Structures Repetition Test (developed by the investigator to assess syntactic acquisition), no significant differences in treatment groups were evident. However, differences between grades were significant at the .001 level.
In yet another experimental three-year program, a method for improving the teaching of reading and language to young children was tried. Twenty fifteen minute television programs demonstrated ways to use children's literature as the central core for beginning reading instruction. Teachers received a detailed study guide for each lesson, a kit of library books and other materials. Children were in kindergarten and grade 1. The literature was selected to maximize linguistic learnings and enable the child to use his knowledge of the predictable nature of oral English as a beginning step in learning to read. The authors of this Reading Development Project Report (1974) wrote that the use of predictable patterns in literary models provides the learner with cues which help him to obtain meaning from the semantic environment and thus, develop strategies for handling unfamiliar structures and words. Findings indicated that experimental teachers tended to provide more pupil reading activities in the classroom ($p < .01$) while all experimental pupils made significant gains in vocabulary, reading achievement and attitude toward reading ($p < .05$). Standardized tests were administered throughout, but on a picture test created to measure oral language, as measured by the T-unit, gains of the experimental group were non-significant.

A final work by Gardner and Gardner (1971) involved devising a story-completing and retelling task to ascertain the extent and range of children's skills in creating,
communicating and comprehending stories. No special treatment was involved. Twelve subjects in each of four grades (1, 3, 6 and 9) were selected at random from middle class schools. The children made up endings to two stories having different plots and styles and then were asked a few general questions. Their oral responses were tape recorded. Literary skill was shown to improve with age. A major spurt in literary development occurred at about age seven, as in other cognitive realms. There was a wide range of abilities within each group. Adolescents seemed most skilled in literary tasks, but the capacity to perform logical operations impaired literary competence. The results suggest to the investigators that elementary school teachers should offer their students "maximum opportunity to engage in literary creativity, since the height of their potential passes quickly" (1971:46).

In this sampling of research, the efficacy of literature-based programs in the primary grades has generally been upheld. In particular, their use with disadvantaged youngsters seems beneficial. No study was found which dealt with the influence of exposure to literature on story-composing skills in children of this age.

Use of the Nebraska Curriculum

Where the Nebraska English Curriculum has been adopted, the most important factor in curriculum change has been the individual teacher who recommended it to others
after first teaching some units in the classroom. This phenomenon was discovered by Ekwall (1970) after a series of interviews. Teachers and other educators have explored the strengths of the curriculum in beginning reading and language programs. For example, Wasserman and Brockman (1970) developed the story modeling technique, incorporating the Nebraska approach into a beginning program of reading instruction. They advocated the use of "the component of literature, the common language of man, instead of tightly programmed materials" (1970:2). Their plan began with the oral reading and telling of teacher-selected stories from the nine genres and the eventual identification of motifs and repetitive lines for class discussion. The process by which children later model a story or poem based on the one presented was described. Other follow-up activities were proposed and children's own stories were made into booklets for classroom reading. Young children of varying ethnic backgrounds were shown to be capable of innovating on a theme. Wasserman (1970) relates how an eclectic curriculum, designed to raise the proficiency of Mexican-American children in written and oral English, was used in a demonstration school during a National Defense Education Act Institute for English in the summers of 1967 and 1968 and again in 1969. The Nebraska Curriculum was borrowed from extensively, as well as English as a Second Language strategies, language, composition and other literature. In addition to story modeling, the primary aged children worked in oral
language explorations, phonology, syntax and morphology. In working with Mexican-American children the following observations were noted: (1) oral experiences should precede written; (2) a warm, permissive climate must accompany a fairly structured language development program; (3) literature provides a wealth of the finest language for building children's understanding of English; (4) children do internalize the language they hear if provided with many opportunities for utilizing language; and (5) children readily recognize the structure of stories and utilize this awareness in creating improvisations which further their own expression skills.

The sentence-building exercises based on transformational grammar used in grades 1, 4 and 5 at the National Defense Education Act Institute in 1967 are detailed by Stryker (1968). He illustrated how some of the ideas in the Nebraska Curriculum work out in the classroom when employed by experienced and competent teachers. Pupils in the primary class were able to increase vocabulary and learn to speak in whole sentences. They performed simple transformations with ease, aided by exercises such as changing word order by moving cards, asking and responding to questions in pairs, and describing hidden objects in a guessing game. At all levels, it seemed best to start with oral work and move into written. Sentences used in all lessons were interesting or familiar, from literature read in class, pupils' own speaking and writing, and classroom events.
This seemed preferable to sentences made up for exercise with no concern for content. Grammatical terminology was avoided; yet, pupils were "made aware of the sentence form and what can be done about it" (1968:16).

Statistical studies have attempted to ascertain whether or not children in Nebraska Curriculum programs progress toward adult syntactic models faster than do children in traditional programs (Nemanich, 1967). In the literature uncovered thus far, children's writing has been the dependent variable. Oral language studies have not been undertaken.

Thompson (1967) employed A Curriculum for English in studying the rate of syntactic growth in third and sixth grade children. There were three groups of thirty pupils each at both grade levels. Subjects were matched for intelligence and socioeconomic background. Pre- and posttreatment compositions of all children were analyzed, using the Nebraska Study of the Syntax of Children's Writing. The three language arts programs were: A, an intensive treatment using only the Nebraska Curriculum for English; B, a moderate treatment using the same materials less precisely; C, a traditional grammar approach centered around a textbook. Children in Programs A and B displayed greater syntactic growth, with Group A students making greater gains, particularly those with low intelligence quotients. Girls were found to use more mature sentence patterns than boys, with all results significant at the .05 level of confidence.
While increases in T-unit length were not measured in the children's writing, Thompson did consider the number of T-units on the pretest and posttest. That total increased for writers in the literature group. In levels of complexity, the sentences produced were analyzed using thirty-six variables of syntactic maturity. It was suggested that perhaps there was a "growth ceiling" which limited the progress of those subjects who were initially more skillful in writing more mature forms. This ceiling was less inhibiting with those in Group A.

Sebesta (1967) evaluated test compositions written by children in grades 2 through 6 after viewing a film, with the aim of discovering differences between children exposed to the Nebraska Curriculum and control subjects. The first five sentences in each child's composition and a five hundred sentence sample from the writings of twenty-five major modern American writers of prose and fiction provided data for analysis. A multilevel instrument of syntactic analysis, similar to one developed by R. Strickland (1962) was used. On nine measures of intelligence and achievement, the experimental children surpassed others in a traditional language arts program at grades 2, 3 and 4. The subject-verb-object pattern decreased in written language as the children matured. The use of the Nebraska Curriculum enabled pupils to approach criteria inferred from adult professional writings. Syntactic difference between second and sixth graders was greater than that between sixth graders and professionals.
The training variable, as stated by Sebesta, involved structural grammar connected with some study of syntactically sophisticated literature. Furthermore, he related that the curriculum "is designed to teach written composition through literary models and conscious awareness of prose style" (1967:174). The task of the teacher was to bring about conscious awareness of the sentence patterns of English that students are already using so that they can talk about them, and then to teach the various ways they can be expanded and combined. Sebesta refers to Borgh's theory for expanding the spectrum of English syntax (1965). That dictated composition might yield somewhat different results was noted in reference to Harrell's experiment (1957).

Finally, syntactic maturity has been measured by the length of written T-units in assigned writing tasks. In a study by Jacobsson (1974), two comparable third grade classrooms were exposed for six months to different methods of language instruction, the control group using a traditional textbook approach (Roberts English series), and the experimental group employing a literature approach (Nebraska Curriculum). The latter group gained approximately three grade levels in T-unit length, while the control group gained a normal one grade level. Mean scores were compared with data from O'Donnell (1967) and Hunt (1964) to validate this conclusion. In mean words per T-unit, the posttest score for the experimental class was 9.57, compared to 8.15 for controls. Level of significance was .05. Jacobsson chose a
story-modeling technique for test compositions, having pupils compose an original story similar to one first read aloud by the investigator.

The evidence surveyed thus far would seem to indicate that *A Curriculum for English* has afforded a framework for a highly successful language arts-composition program in the elementary grades. Furthermore, it has helped students to adopt certain characteristics of more mature writers.

**Research in Composition Skills**

An abundance of research has been done in the area of written composition with elementary school pupils. Studies in oral composition, or dictation, with younger children are more limited. The rationale for the dictation technique and some characteristics of children's compositions should be considered.

**The Dictation Technique**

R. Strickland (1969) relates that there is general agreement among authorities that first graders cannot sustain writing activity very often or for very long periods. She submits that young children should use dictation as long as the need is evident. Dictation involves the following sequential concepts:

1. Spontaneous expression of ideas.
2. Expressing ideas in thought units or sentences so the teacher can put them down.
3. Dictating sentence units more skillfully and purposefully, with attention to the writing process and purpose served.
4. Learning suitable expression for various purposes.  
5. Developing individual style. (1969:251)

Oral dictation is gradually followed by dictation with copying, writing with help, and writing with increasing independence.

Lohmann (1967) demonstrated how first graders learned to write their own stories, proceeding from oral expression in a natural way without strain or anxiety. As she explains, "Dictation can take the drudgery out of composition for many children and add to the quality of thought" (1967:8). The pupils are freed from spelling and producing handwriting symbols they have barely learned. They become aware of punctuation, develop sentence sense and structure sense. As children in her project progressed to independent writing their spontaneity and organization skills surpassed expectations. However, this was not a statistical study.

That sentence concept should be developed orally before plunging into writing was expressed by Russell (1973). He recommends storytelling as a vehicle for allowing the child to use language responsively and deliberately organizing the world he sees. Retelling a narrative leads children to express sentence structure and finally, story structure. Basic readers inhibit development because they usually use present tenses and regular verbs. According to Russell, if a teacher asks who? what? where? why? when? and how? the desired variety of structures may be elicited.
Some Characteristics of Children's Compositions

The quality of children's stories written in response to a symbolic and imaginative film, The Hunter in the Forest, was discussed by Witty and Martin (1957). Although the film had a musical score, there was no narration or dialogue. About 60 percent of the children who viewed the film wrote effective prose or poetry. Many first grade pupils wrote egocentric responses, beginning with "I saw," "I liked," "I didn't like," and so forth. Many labeled objects: "I saw a deer and a baby." Few first graders gave reasons for their observations. The same film was employed with desirable results by Miller and Ney (1968) in an experiment which will be discussed later in this chapter. When Miller and Ney used a different film with dialogue as a stimulus for writing stories, contamination from the dialogue confounded the results of their pre- and posttests and made valid comparisons between treatment groups difficult. Cazden (1972) has shown that personal involvement with a stimulus or topic can likewise influence children's oral responses. When the subject was a personal experience, the structural complexity of sentences increased. McCarthy (1954) reported that child's sentences are shortest in play situations, but averaged 10.4 words in audience ("show and tell") situations with other children in grade 1. The importance of the stimulus topic and conditions for gathering data becomes evident.
There is a paucity of research dealing with composition in first grade, especially where the literature-related skills developed by the Nebraska program are concerned. Oral compositions were evaluated in an early study by Beverley (1925), who collected samples of first grade work as recorded by classroom teachers in 150 Detroit public schools. Children created a story which related a personal experience. A district committee selected examples of compositions which they rated as inferior, fair, good, excellent and superior. Beverley noted that the beginnings of the qualities found in good literature are all to be observed in children's compositions. Coherence, climax, diction (including vocabulary, sentence structure and arrangement), individuality and humor were all present in simplest form in the responses of the children. Stories which attained higher ratings were regarded as more complete, humorous, organized, coherent, vigorous, vivid, mature in expression and strong in sequence. There was a general trend for the better storytellers to dictate longer stories relating a complete incident.

When composition quality was rated by judges in another study by Sullivan (1974), first grade pupils in a program providing systematic writing practice scored significantly higher ($p < .01$) than controls. Both groups of children participated in the same reading program, but the experimental group were given a series of sixty-four exercises carefully developed with sequenced practice on writing
tasks that increased in complexity. The posttest consisted of a story written in response to a single picture. "Composition" pupils wrote longer stories, more sentences, and made fewer spelling errors with results significant at the .05 level.

Finally, the differences between oral and written compositions have been investigated. Howell (1956) analyzed 240 oral and written compositions of seven-year-olds on topics arbitrarily assigned and those from shared learning experiences. Among her conclusions were: (1) written compositions differed from dictated in length, size of vocabulary and number of generalizations. When they dictate, children use more words. When they write, they pick out the kernel of their thoughts; (2) shared experiences are more conducive to "generalizing" than assigned topics; (3) boys dictate longer compositions; girls write longer compositions. Both written and oral situations are therefore needed. Harrell (1957) also found that oral compositions are longer than written. His children were nine, eleven, thirteen and fifteen. In general, length of stories increased with age, with girls writing longer stories and boys telling longer ones. Stories were responses to sound movies about bear cubs. The overall gain in length of clause from youngest to oldest age group was greater in written than oral stories. With advance in age, children used more words per clause and a greater percentage of types of subordinate clauses.
In view of these findings, the vehicle of oral composition for first grade children would seem advisable. In addition, the careful selection of a stimulus topic and method of motivation appears to be a significant consideration.

Research in the T-unit as a Measure of Syntactic Maturity

Prior to 1965 researchers measuring language growth utilized mean sentence length as one index of maturity. Smith (1926), McCarthy (1930), Davis (1937), Templin (1957) and R. Strickland (1962) all relied upon the same basic structure, although it was variously labeled as a "phonological unit," "expression unit," or "communication unit" (Loban, 1963). Length of sentence ultimately proved unsatisfactory because younger children do not always punctuate correctly. Excessive coordination using and is another characteristic of immature writers, and sentence length does not account for this tendency. Although analysis seemed to point toward an increase in mean sentence length with increasing age, R. Strickland (1962) found phonological units to be unsatisfactory because more variance in length occurred within than between grade levels. The need for an objective, quantifiable measure that accounts for syntactic variations was described by O'Donnell (1968).

The T-unit was proposed by Hunt, who adopted the technique of segmenting student's written compositions into
what he called "minimal terminable units" (1965). A T-unit is one main clause and all subordinate clauses attached to it or embedded within it. It avoids the length achieved by coordinate clauses and is not affected by punctuation.

While the T-unit is similar to Loban's "communication unit" (1963, 1966), it meets O'Donnell's criteria for a practical instrument to measure language development. O'Donnell maintained that such an instrument would: (1) be based on a reliable and valid index of language maturity; (2) be easily administered; (3) be easily scored (1968).

In his study of grammatical structures written at three grade levels, Hunt altered the subordination index (the ratio of all clauses to subordinate clauses). Instead of dividing the number of subordinate clauses by the total number of clauses, he suggested that total number of clauses be divided by the number of main clauses. By ascertaining the number of clauses per T-unit, and applying the following equations, Hunt obtained these results:

\[
\frac{\text{words}}{\text{clauses}} \times \frac{\text{clauses}}{\text{T-units}} = \frac{\text{words}}{\text{T-units}}
\]

\[
\frac{\text{words}}{\text{T-units}} \times \frac{\text{T-units}}{\text{sentences}} = \frac{\text{words}}{\text{sentences}}
\]

Combining these equations, the end result would be:

\[
\frac{\text{words}}{\text{clauses}} \times \frac{\text{clauses}}{\text{T-units}} \times \frac{\text{T-units}}{\text{sentences}} = \frac{\text{words}}{\text{sentences}}
\]
O'Donnell, Griffin and Norris (1967) analyzed the oral and written syntax of elementary school children, applying the T-unit and concentrating only on those grammatical transformations that could be called sentence-combining. Subjects were in kindergarten and grades 1, 2, 3, 5 and 7. Oral responses were taped after they viewed a motion picture with the sound turned off. Each child told the story to an interviewer and answered certain questions. Children in grades 3, 5 and 7 also wrote stories and responses to questions. Results confirmed the findings of Hunt that length of T-unit increases with advance in grade level. Number of clause per T-unit and total word length also shown to increase with age. Of concern to the present study were several additional findings. First graders dramatically reduced use of incomplete sentence patterns, as well as main clauses in which there is a predicate nominal ("He was a hunter."). Increments in sentence transformations were greatest in grades 1 and 7, as were increments in use of nominal and adverbial constructions in speech.

In another study, O'Donnell (1968) obtained writing samples of eighty pupils in grades 4, 6 and 8. He attempted to minimize such factors as length of composition, subject matter, and conditions under which samples are produced. Children were asked to rewrite a narrative of simple declarative sentences, putting short sentences together to make longer ones. Again, T-unit shown to be the most useful index of maturity. Increases with grade in clause length,
T-unit length and number of clauses per T-unit were statistically significant.

Other normative studies have supported the validity of the T-unit as a measure of structural complexity. Fox (1972) found that the number of T-units showed a growth pattern with maturity. Total word count likewise showed a developmental trend. Subjects in the study were in grades kindergarten, 1, 2, and 3. Growth from kindergarten to first grade was most significant on all measures ($p < .01$). O'Donnell et al. obtained similar findings. Dixon (1972) used the writing of students at four grade levels and found T-unit to be the best single index for distinguishing children's writing. T-unit accounted for 44 percent of all variation among grade levels. Finally, Bougere (1968), working with samples of first graders' oral language, concluded that mean length of T-unit was significantly related to two measures of syntactic complexity: (1) ratio of subordinate clause length of T-unit length; and (2) ratio of sentence-combining transformations to T-units. The findings of different investigators are summarized in Table 1.

#### Experiments Using Special Treatments to Enhance Syntactic Growth, Measured by the T-unit

Several studies using children much older than those participating in the present study attempted to search for reasons to explain the developmental trend described by Hunt and O'Donnell. Mellon (1969) observed that normal cognitive
Table 1
Comparison of Mean Sentence and Mean T-unit Length of First Grade Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Investigator*</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Mean Length</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O'Donnell (1967)</td>
<td>T-unit</td>
<td>7.97 (range, 5.2-10.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fox (1972)</td>
<td>T-unit</td>
<td>7.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loban (1963)</td>
<td>Communication unit</td>
<td>6.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. Strickland (1962)</td>
<td>Phonological unit</td>
<td>10.87 (range, 1-76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Templin (1957)</td>
<td>Expression unit</td>
<td>6.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hughes (1949)</td>
<td>Sentence</td>
<td>8.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All investigators used first grade children in the presence of an adult, responding to structured stimuli.
growth occurs without the aid of formally designed pedagogy. The assumption underlying these investigations is that rates of growth are variable and amenable to change.

Using seventh graders, Mellon examined the effects of grammar practice on the growth of syntactic fluency. The student in Mellon's study was given a set of kernel sentences and directions for combining these into a single complex statement, which he then wrote out. There was no rhetorical setting or direct teaching of styles or grammar. Briefly, the gains by the experimental group were such that on posttest compositions, growth rates were more than twice the normal rate of growth as indicated by Hunt's findings. The T-units written by these subjects were over one word longer than those of controls. The yearly increment reported by Hunt is .7 of one word. The experimental group significantly increased its fluency on twelve factors of fluency, but was not superior in writing quality. Mellon recommends that sentence-combining and/or expansion be tried on an appropriate game basis with younger children.

Mellon's format was modified in a later study by O'Hare (1971), but 95 percent of Mellon's practice sentences were retained so that comparisons could be made. Seventh graders' free writing was analyzed over a period of eight months. Fifty T-units per student were collected for pre- and posttreatment writing. Experimental and control groups were exposed to the same kinds of units, speech, and plays and wrote the same number of assignments. The experimental
group had sentence-combining practice and practiced choral readings of about one third of completed sentences after writing. After treatment, mean T-unit for the experimental group was 15.75 words, compared with 11.34 reported by Hunt for eighth graders and 11.25 for Mellon's seventh graders. O'Donnell's seventh graders wrote 9.99 words per T-unit. The experimental subjects showed growth over controls on six factors of syntactic maturity significant at the .001 level. In words per T-unit they experienced twenty times normal growth. O'Hare questioned Mellon's assertion that a knowledge of generative grammar did not influence the experimental group. O'Hare's pupils were provided with a set of signals that capitalized instead on students' sense of "grammaticality."

The technique of audio-lingual drills was demonstrated to have a favorable effect on the writing of fourth graders in an experiment conducted by Miller and Ney (1968). Their experimental group worked with ten sets of sentences with the same structure as an example. The instructor read two cue sentences written on the board and then combined them and read them in their combined form. Practice consisted of the instructor reading two cue sentences; then individual students combining two cues orally. The entire class said the sentence in unison. Individual students were then called upon. After oral practice, students and instructors joined in the choral reading of a prose passage. Finally, at the end of the period, one or two cue sentences
were read by the instructor and correct response sentences were written by students. Results indicated that the experimental group showed a gain in number of multi-clause T-units significant at the .01 level. This was not true of single-clause T-units. Length of T-unit on the final test was 9.0 for the experimental group and 8.6 for controls. Hunt's fourth graders showed a mean of 8.6. Experimental subjects also increased the use of structures which had been practiced at the .001 level of confidence on the final posttest.

The high level of effectiveness related to sentence-combining drill in all three studies would seem to indicate that a program of practicing more complex structures may be more productive than one of direct grammar instruction. When T-unit analysis of the oral responses of younger children is examined, the absence of such practice may be critical. Christensen (1973) used the T-unit in assessing the effects of two kindergarten programs upon oral language facility over a five month period. One program was a regular language arts curriculum, while the second was a language experience approach to reading. Among her conclusions she noted that neither teaching approach, social class or sex exerted a significant influence on mean length of T-unit or growth of multi- and single-clause T-units. The authors of the Reading Development Project Report (1974) described a literature program for language and beginning reading which was oriented to language experience in its methodology. Kindergarten and first grade children were interviewed in a
picture test at the beginning and end of the project, which lasted the entire school year. The experimental group gained in T-unit length over the control group, which had conventional basal-reader instruction. However, the gains were not statistically significant. Perhaps the implications of these two studies are that teacher may not recognize the specific behaviors which combine to produce language fluency, or which skills should be developed at various stages of the language experience approach to reading.

Research in the Development of Oral Language in Young Children

Many researchers have analyzed and described the spoken language of primary-aged children. An overview will reveal that a great variety and wide range of different structures and patterns are employed by first graders. The discrepancy between children's language and that of their beginning reading books has also been well documented. As early as 1949, Hughes and Cox discovered that first grade pupils used many more descriptive, action and relational words than those found in their readers. Median sentence length in primers and preprimers was only five words, while the language was much simpler in meaning and construction. Strang and Hocker (1965) found that first graders use all types of sentence patterns and favor the introduction of basic linguistic patterns in beginner's books. The child was seen as having a wide range of manipulative ability in
oral language, while facility in oral language was viewed as a prerequisite to reading instruction.

Strang and Hocker (1965) advocate the reading of appropriate literature at each stage of development. California English Language Framework (1968) recommends reading aloud of literature each day. "Oral language is the broad base upon which programs in reading and composition are built" (1968:10). A "tuned inner ear" is requisite to the development of effective writing and a sense of style.

R. Strickland (1962) isolated and described patterns of syntax in the oral language of children in grades 1-6. One of the many findings of her major study was that children at all levels use language that is far more advanced than that of the books in which they receive reading instruction. In addition, there seemed to be no scheme for the development of control over sentence structure which paralleled the generally accepted scheme for vocabulary in the readers analyzed. The advantages of employing literature are pointed out in Strickland's comment that

... stories which were old folk tales or fairy tales retold were couched in sentences of greater variety and length than the sentences in stories of contemporary boys and girls. (1962:67).

Francis (1962), who was a doctoral candidate working in the Strickland project, reported that first graders' "phono-logical units" (similar to a sentence) were less than twenty words 80 percent of the time. The number of language patterns was 658 at grade 1, compared to 1,041 at grade 6.
Intelligence, mental age, socioeconomic status, education of each parent and age of siblings all appeared to be significant factors in relation to structure of oral language and ability to use moveables and subordination elements. The tendency for children from high status families to use longer sentences and more mature forms at earlier ages was noted in an early study by McCarthy (1930).

The socioeconomic status of pupils in Loban's longitudinal study (1963, 1966) was directly related to how they were classified in language proficiency. Oral language samples were taken from pupils from kindergarten through ninth grade. Problems of children speaking standard English were similar to those of pupils speaking nonstandard English in one sense: pupils did not seem to need drill on usage, but rather work with coherence, clarity and precision. Both high and low achievers used the same general structural patterns, but the high group attained greater flexibility. A consistent, positive relationship was found between measures of intelligence quotient, writing proficiency, use of subordinating connectives and standard reading scores. According to Loban,

Competence in spoken language appears to be a necessary base for competence in writing and reading. . . . The approach would be through models, meaning and reasoning. . . . (1963:45)

Loban favors using sentences of the children's own creating and avoidance of grammar rules.
Templin (1957) remarked that in collecting samples of oral speech, grammatically incomplete and inaccurate sentences are more frequent. Nevertheless, she discovered that proportionately fewer one-word remarks and incomplete sentences were found than in earlier studies by Davis (1937) and McCarthy (1930). Templin's subjects ranged in age from three to eight. An increase with age of all types of sentences that involve increasing complexity and a decrease in use of one-word remarks were seen with advances in age. In general, children used more mature language and longer responses than they had twenty-five years before.

That language skill development can be favorably influenced has been demonstrated with primary children. Endo (1974) determined that pupils in grades 1-3 could construct metaphors and acquire a set of rules for generating subsequent metaphors. The first subjects observed models who made up sentences for stimulus nouns, then they constructed a similar metaphor using the same noun. The same results were achieved when the stimulus noun was different than that in the model. Working with pre-kindergarten children, Day and Nurss (1970) compared two groups of lower status children after ten months of language instruction to increase language proficiency. Findings from subtests of the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities favored children in a Bereiter-Engelmann program of behavioristic, tightly structured lessons similar to the audio-lingual drill method. Moreover, children in a program based on
"interest units" with less direct teaching and sequencing of steps did not show evidence of transferring language behavior from the teaching situation to an open-ended interview. Those in the structured group used adjectives and concept words with greater clarity and regularity. Disadvantaged first graders who participated in a language experience approach for forty-five minutes daily were tested by Siders (1971), using seventeen language and reading readiness variables. A control group was tested without the benefit of daily language experiences. Results disclosed that children in the experimental group performed at a level significantly superior to control children in sustained classroom speech, simple fluency and labeling skills.

Other special treatments designed specifically to enhance syntactic growth will be discussed in the following section.

Other Research Related to Children's Syntax

The question of whether or not young children are capable of absorbing instruction in syntax has been addressed by many researchers in linguistics and education. As Bruner (1962) pointed out, before the child appears at school for formal training, he is able to generate his own sentences and make simple transformations. Some problems have been the investigation of (1) the child's ability to understand sentences of varying structures, (2) ability to produce types of sentences, (3) the rate of acquisition, and (4)
individual variation in rates of development. These and other considerations have been expatiated in the literature.

The Acquisition of Syntax

Menyuk (1969) maintains that recall of sentences in children aged three through seven is dependent on the structure of the sentence rather than its length. In her study age was the only significant variable tested. Sex, intelligence quotient and situation were never significantly correlated with numbers of syntactic structures used. She found that the child can determine what a sentence, word or speech sound is and store them in his memory. He than adds to the properties of the members of these categories. He remembers the functional relationships of these features and notes rising and falling intonation, singular and plural nouns, and so forth. But, as Menyuk concludes, "There is some evidence that, on the whole, the child [ages 3-6] does not produce what he does not understand" (1969:121).

Chomsky (1969) actually tested the comprehension of four structures in forty children, ages five through ten. Since thinking abstractly about a sentence was difficult for them, the task of answering questions was simplified by the presence of physical objects to look at while they considered the sentence. Examples of the four sentences are listed here:

1. John is easy to see.
2. John promised Bill to go.
3. John asked Billy what to do.
4. He knew that John was going to win the race. (1969:38)
There was considerable variation in ages of children who knew the structures and those who did not, but a common shared order of acquisition was observed. Structures 1 and 2 seemed to be acquired between the ages of five and nine. Structure 3 was still imperfect even at age ten, while structure 4 was fairly uniform at ages five and six. Thus, Chomsky demonstrated that active syntactic learning still occurs at age nine and beyond, later than the common view that structures of language are learned by age six.

The speech of kindergarten children was recorded in a play situation by Davis (1941) with the aim of analyzing the position of subordinate clauses. The writing of the nine-year-olds was also studied. Subjects who were lowest in intelligence quotient used no subordinate clauses at all. Children having highest intelligence quotients tended to place clauses where they preceded or interrupted the main clause. Clauses of time or condition came early in the sentence 29 percent of the time for five-year-olds and 54 percent for nine-year-olds. For the latter group, position of clauses in a sentence was the same for oral and written language. However, in the older subjects a less clear-cut relationship between subordination index and intelligence was exhibited.

Acquisition of other structures was found to be dependent upon maturity as well as socioeconomic level by Hammer (1969). The subjects tested were first graders divided into mature and immature groups, then subdivided
into middle and lower class categories. Analysis was made of total frequencies of movables and connectors used by the children in telling stories about each of five stimulus pictures. Statistically significant differences in the use of movables denoting manner and causes were found for all mature children. Total frequency of all movables and connectors was significantly higher in middle class mature children. Pupils in immature groups showed no significant differences in frequency of movables and connectors, but all children were found to use these patterns at some time.

Borgh (1965) demonstrated that children can expand and elaborate sentences through movable units and elements of subordination in the primary years. Utilizing the findings of R. Strickland (1962) and Loban (1963), regarding the child's linguistic flexibility, Borgh outlines strategies for early work in oral and written composition. Children, she suggests, can expand the five basic declarative sentence patterns intuitively, and can be shown how to do so consciously. The child can also be shown how to make transformations without learning a set of rules. The reading of sentences in rhythm patterns is proposed as an effective introduction to syntax. According to Borgh, "The increasing control of structure may then enable the child to use the vocabulary he has gained in his reading experience" (1965:34).
Special Treatments to Enhance Syntactic Growth

Attempts to increase the child's control over structure have been successfully reported in experiments with older children. The works of Mellon, O'Hare and Miller and Ney have already been reviewed. Two experiments in sentence training with younger children have implications for language training programs. In the first investigation, by Bandura and Harris (1966), subjects were second grade boys and girls. Children took turns making up sentences with an adult model. Two linguistic constructions were tested for use of passive voice ("The dog was fed by the man") and prepositional phrases ("It is on the table"). Prepositional phrases were more easily generated. The majority of children were not able to discern what a passive construction was. Modeling cues alone had no effect on children's syntactic style. Significant results ($p < .05$) were achieved when an "active attentional set" was induced. In the "set" condition, children were told to pay close attention to the sentences that earned stars and figure out what kind of sentence earned a star. The children in this way were gradually taught to abstract the linguistic rule by modeling a variety of objects. However, Bandura and Harris posed the question,

Can children acquire rules of syntax from repeatedly hearing grammatical utterances of adult models over an extended period of time without benefit of selective reinforcement or other forms of corrective feedback? (1966:352)
This observation relates directly to the foundation of the first grade Nebraska Curriculum. It builds on the effects of exposure to fine literature upon children's ability to handle the model language in their own speaking and writing.

The effects of sentence training by imitating models were also studied by Ammon (1970) to determine whether transfer occurred in other areas of language performance. Sentence training emphasized the application of target forms to new constructions, which were grammatically similar to the Sentence Imitation Test. Trainers provided models to preschool and kindergarten children, and encouraged generalization. Performance on the Sentence Imitation posttest was not improved after six weeks of practice. Like Bandura and Harris, Ammon discovered that children could not produce some forms at all, especially adverbial and relative clauses. It is possible, then, that the rate of cognitive development may not be amenable to change at certain levels.

Summary

A review of the literature related to the present study has revealed that recently-developed literature programs have been effective in producing gains in reading, composition, and other language arts tasks. Studies by Thompson (1967), Sebesta (1967), Jacobsson (1974), and others have demonstrated that the use of the Nebraska Curriculum for English has been successful in accelerating children's syntactic growth in grades 2-6. The T-unit has
been shown to be a valid measure of syntactic maturity by Hunt (1965), O'Donnell et al. (1967), and Fox (1972). Mellon (1969), O'Hare (1971) and other investigators found that sentence-combining drills were highly effective in lengthening the T-unit in student's writing. Providing systematic practice in composition to first graders, Sullivan (1974) discovered that children wrote longer stories of higher quality than controls. Older pupils were shown to speak and write with more varied and longer clauses, as well as writing longer stories, with advances in age (Harrell, 1957). The work of Wasserman and Brockman (1970), Stryker (1968), and Jacobsson (1974) has pointed to the need for further investigation into the uses of the story-modeling technique, oral experiences along with written, and finally, the need to test their findings that children do internalize and utilize the language they hear if provided with ample experiences such as those in the Nebraska Curriculum.

Chapter III will deal with the design for the present study, teaching methodologies, selection of the sample, and other organizational considerations.
CHAPTER III

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

In the previous chapter, this investigator attempted to show that exposure to a literature-based, linguistically oriented program of language arts instruction might enable children to make significant gains in oral composition. The T-unit was demonstrated to be a workable measure of pupil's syntactic maturity. There also appeared to be a general trend for children to write longer compositions with more complex sentences as they mature. Chapter III will analyze the two teaching approaches involved in the study, instruments and procedures that were developed, and the identification of population and data sources.

Teaching Methodologies Employed

Introduction

California's English Language Framework (1968) delineates three components of English as a subject for study. They are: (1) language, including spelling, grammar and usage; (2) literature; and (3) composition. The University of Nebraska's A Curriculum for English, also referred to as the Nebraska Curriculum, is in line with the suggestions of the California Advisory Committee for an English Language
Framework regarding a literature program. According to the committee, everyone should become acquainted with

1. the most basic literary forms and conventions by means of which literature captures and creates experience: myth, legend, as well as realistic writing;
2. the effects of word choice and style, sound and rhythm and the manner of each writer's individual expression;
3. the significance of the author's formal choices in giving shape to an artistic world for his literary audience. (1968:26)

The Ginn Elementary English program, on the other hand, bases its plan on the need to involve the first grade child in a well-balanced program of listening, speaking, writing and reading. These four skills are viewed as being interdependent. Like the Nebraska Curriculum, Ginn Elementary English includes oral communication and storytelling, and provides for dramatizations, role playing, choral speaking, and vocabulary-building games. A further look at the two methodologies will reveal some important differences between them.

The Control Group

The control group was involved in a textbook approach which was designed to be the first step in a developmental English program to equip the pupil to become an adult skilled in every aspect of communication. The scope of the Ginn Elementary English program, which was written by Reid and Crane (1968), includes four phases, which are briefly summarized as follows: (1) listening, attitudes,
learning to listen in school; (2) speaking, correct forms, dictating, describing, discussing, dramatic activities; (3) writing, letter formation, chart stories, mechanics of composition, correcting techniques, and (4) reading, applying reading skills to writing.

The teacher's guide lists twenty-five objectives separately for the first year. Some objectives which relate to composition, literature and related oral activities are listed below:

a. To help children develop the ability to tell events of a story in sequential order.
b. To help children develop a sentence sense.
c. To help children utilize their personal experiences in oral and written composition.
d. To provide many opportunities wherein children's concepts are deepened through dramatic play, role-play, and dramatization.
e. Through stories, pictures, and poems to give children practice in making inferences, solving problems, arriving at generalizations, appreciating the moods of others and interpreting characters.
f. To stimulate the enjoyment of literature by furnishing children many opportunities to listen to old tales, modern stories and poems centered about the interests of first grade children. (1968:M28)

The authors make liberal use of such vague terms as "awareness," "understanding," "enjoyment," "to appreciate," and "develop a respect for."

Each pupil has his own workbook, called My Practice Book, and a copy of My Picture Dictionary. In this experiment, the control group teacher did not have a dictionary for every child. The children wrote simple stories and other exercises directly on their workbook pages. The first
year curriculum has two parts, labeled I-1 and I-2. The teacher is admonished to observe the recommended sequence and teach individual lessons carefully. In this way, the child will be prepared for later "successful achievement." Each lesson plan offers related activities and enrichment materials to help provide for individual differences.

Although Ginn Elementary English does not attempt to teach grammar or writing style at this level, there is a specific content which is not directly taught in the curriculum used by the experimental group. This content includes handwriting, capitalization rules, punctuation rules, alphabetical order, use of dictionaries, finding words independently, interpreting pictures, speaking and enunciating clearly, following directions, contributing to discussion and listening attentively.

In the area of storytelling, oral and written communication, the Ginn program relies upon children talking and writing about things of interest to them, such as pets, toys, and friends. Other oral activities center around poetry or pictures in the text. Children tell stories of pictures in sequential order, sometimes creating additional episodes. Classical tales are also encompassed, three of which are found in the Nebraska Curriculum: *Little Red Hen*, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, and *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*. The skills of writing are taught in Book I-1 and reviewed in I-2. Children continue to write stories based on oral language experiences and reactions to stories, poems, and
books. Proofreading, correcting and evaluating by the child are provided for.

Teaching the Control Group

The teacher of the control group followed the Ginn Elementary English Teacher's Manual precisely. Since even the texts of the literature stories are included in the manual, no additional materials are needed. Two or three lessons were usually covered per week, averaging a total of sixty minutes and not exceeding seventy-five. The control and the experimental teachers kept a time log and recorded the length of every lesson in order to adhere strictly to time limitations. Both classes followed similar reading programs with the same basal reader series. Each teacher had the same number of years of teaching experience in the primary grades. Both had prior experience in working with their respective English programs. Neither teacher assigned any composition tasks to be done at home or outside of class.

The Experimental Group

A Curriculum for English was published in 1966, as an extension of the suggestions made at a University of Nebraska curriculum workshop in 1961. It covers the years of kindergarten through high school. The stories chosen exemplify principles of literary form without demanding that children discuss formal principles. These ideas "can be
taught to some level of the student's understanding, and taught in such a way that secondary school teachers can build on them" (1966a:xxiii). In this sense, it is a "spiral" curriculum. One premise is that the desire to read, understanding of one's native language, and competence in composition develop from a continuing exposure to literature of superior quality.

A sequence of literary works leads children from the mythic and anthropomorphic to an awareness of the realistic and analytic. Children absorb what is read and manipulate language devices themselves through oral storytelling and written composition. An oral approach is stressed. Literature is classified into nine pseudo-genres, as illustrated in Appendix A. Each of the seventy units in grades 1 through 6 contains (1) introductory material; (2) background about authors; (3) suggestions for inductive teaching procedures; (4) related composition, language and poetry; (5) bibliographies, and (6) audiovisual aids.

Teaching emphasizes the identification of a repetitive situation and word patterns in literature and recognition of meaning in simple story forms. Drawing upon what they learn in class reading and their explorations in language, children are able to dramatize scenes and are invited to do model writing based on structure. Besides the grade level "unit book," there are two ancillary manuals, Poetry for the Elementary Grades and Language Explorations for the Elementary Grades. There are no pupil textbooks or practice
Some of the fifteen story books suggested for a first grade program were borrowed from libraries when necessary. In summary, then, the Nebraska Curriculum is an experimental, noncommercial, open scheme for presenting language, literature and composition which is intended to teach pupils:

1. To comprehend the more frequent oral and written conventions of literature for young children.
2. To control these linguistic and literary conventions in their own writings.
3. To comprehend consciously the more frequent grammatical conventions they can handle in their own speaking and writing. (1966a:viii)

The composition program, which is based on modeled writing, attempts to give the pupil:

1. A sense of the expressive possibilities of the sound of language.
2. A capacity to manipulate syntactic patterns and to choose the "most desirable" syntactic pattern.
3. A capacity to manipulate simple rhetorical devices and a simple understanding of how consideration of the relation between speaker and audience affects one's handling of oral and written language, and
4. A capacity to write in fictional modes analogous to those studied in literature readings and to add more analytic modes of writing to these very gradually. (1966a:xx)

In contrast to the many grade level goals of the Ginn format, the Nebraska Curriculum guide states a few goals for the entire elementary program. These goals are directed toward acquainting pupils with syntax, phonology, the history of the language and evolution of a spelling system, and the role of punctuation as a suprasegmental feature of spoken discourse.
An oral approach is emphasized as a means of sharpening the child's sense of syntax, tuning his ear, and widening his vocabulary. McKee favored such an orientation when he stated that

... sound teaching of oral expression will lighten the instructional load in written expression. Most practice to be provided in expression should be oral rather than written. (1944:31)

Children perform oral exercises in experimenting with language and note the manner in which words can be reorganized. Examples are provided by teacher-prepared charts or simply by writing on the chalkboard. The linguistic exercises are nonanalytic. No rules are taught. First graders are introduced to transformational sentence-combining on an informal level. More mature writing is fostered in later grades by more precise instruction in sentence construction. For example, practice in adding to kernel sentences is deemed of primary importance. In order to change immature syntax to mature syntax, the student is encouraged to rewrite and revise his sentences by changing, shifting, cutting and adding.

Teaching the Experimental Group

The teacher of the experimental group followed the unit plans and supplemented stories from the core text as recommended. The order was changed slightly, which is permitted by the curriculum guide. Because the units are "sliding" from grade level to grade level, there is no need to cover every one. In fact, authors express the view that
it is vain to try to cover every area of English in one grade. Children in the experimental group dictated or wrote a composition every week. The decision regarding oral versus written tasks was made by the teacher on the basis of abilities, interests, and readiness of the children, in keeping with the procedures recommended by the authors. In like manner, portions of Language Explorations, Extended Activities, and Poetry were selected at the teacher's discretion.

One of the structural motifs presented in the units of the curriculum is that of "a small person's or hero's journey from home to a confrontation with a monster" (1966a: xviii). This story plot is discovered in one of the first stories to be read. The experimental class was just beginning to try their wings at story modeling, although they were accustomed to dictating sentences. A brief description of some procedures which were successful with The Gingerbread Boy may be helpful in showing how the children were introduced to this kind of activity. Although the unit was presented in January, some children were still quite immature, shy or hesitant about relating their ideas. They needed practice in sequencing; very few could tell an original story with a definite beginning, middle and conclusion. It seemed advisable to work in groups, especially for those with a limited command of English.

On the first day, the teacher followed the suggested plan for reading and discussing The Gingerbread Boy. The
children took turns arranging the characters on a flannel board during the listening. On the following day, a similar tale, The Pancake Man, was read to the class. The class compared the two stories and then participated in cooking a huge pancake in an electric pan. The children imitated the family in the story and talked about eating their creation. Then the teacher said, "Suppose this pancake could hear us talking about eating him up. Would he be frightened? What do you think he would do?" The children seemed fascinated and amused by this idea. The class was then divided into three "language groups" and each group had a turn in dictating its part of the story as the teacher recorded it on large paper. The groups rotated among the three activities: group dictation, painting and drawing illustrations, and headphone listening to a recording of The Gingerbread Boy with accompanying storybooks cut from obsolete readers. This three-group plan was often used during the semester. The following story was typed on a primary typewriter, duplicated and given to each child on the third day.

The Pancake Story
by Room 3

Group 1

Everybody made a pancake today,
in a pan.
It was getting frightened,
and it jumped out of the pan
and ran away.
It went to Mr. Holding.
"Hello, Pancake. Don't go so fast.
I want to eat you," said Mr. Holding.
"Good morning, Captain," said the pancake. "I ran away from Room 3 and 31 children, and I can run away from you."

Group 2

The pancake went to Room 5. "Hello, pancake," said the children. "Wait, don't go. We want to eat you."
"You can't eat me. I ran away from Room 3 people and Mr. Holding and I can run away from you, too."
He rolled faster and faster.

Group 3

The pancake went to Mr. Bethel. "Hello, Mr. Pancake. How are you? Get on my back, and I'll give you a piggy back ride."
Mr. Pancake got on his shoulder.
Mr. Bethel flipped him over and swallowed him up.
Snip, snap, snim,
That's the end of him.

After reading the story in class, the children took it home to share. Another technique which helped to lead the children into individual composition was the composing of a complete story by one group. Each child had a turn to dictate a few sentences and add to the previous action or information. After about two months, most of the pupils were able to dictate stories on their own.

Some Differences between the Two Methodologies

To summarize the contrasts, then, the Ginn curriculum was seen as being more comprehensive and definitive, based as it is upon the consensus "characteristics" of the first
grade child. The Nebraska Curriculum proceeds from the child's interaction with the literature. Language lessons borrow example words and sentences directly from the literature. Its foundation is linguistic rather than developmental. It stresses creative composition through which students may emulate syntactic, rhetorical or literary forms. The first grade study of language does not contain much work with children's own sentences, and gives a few simple exercises in transformational grammar. Instead, a broad exposure to literary forms takes place. As Moffett (1968) has proposed, such forms are absorbed by association.

The Nebraska A Curriculum for English seems to allow more freedom to the teacher. Ginn Elementary English follows the plan of the textbook more rigidly. The former program began as an experimental one; the latter is produced in a form which speaks with authority and will compete in the textbook market. Concerning the enrichment of the language environment, Mellon (1969) believes that enrichment should be done maximally and on a sustained basis. Moreover, Mellon finds that language arts programs are most successful when they are least structured, content-oriented and self-conscious. Children in the Nebraska program used literature as a starting point in their communication. In the Ginn program, "rich and varied experiences" are said to be necessary to the child's background and language development. Such development is cumulative, related to maturation, and requires systematic instruction, including direct
teaching of skills, repetition and drill. Children's oral communication emanates from experiences with family, television, telephone conversations, community helpers, and so forth.

A comparison between two uses of the same folk tale made by each program will further illustrate how the approaches differ. Both give background information and suggestions for reading *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* aloud. Repetitive lines are also pointed out. Following the reading, dramatization and word study ("creaked," "groaned," "troll") are mentioned. The children using the Ginn books then interpret six pictures in their workbooks and respond to such questions as, "Where is the smallest Billy Goat Gruff?" and "Do you like the ending?" Finally, they draw a picture of a favorite part of the story. In the Nebraska Curriculum, discussion questions seem more interpretive and thought-provoking: "If the goals were people, which one would you want to be?" "What were the goat's two spears that he talked about?" The children then dictate group stories about another family that has trouble getting somewhere, for example, a mouse family trying to get a piece of cheese and meeting a cat. They are encouraged to "add repetition in the conversations." Compositions are put into class story books or are copied to be taken home. Such "creative compositions" are replaced by more analytic ones as the children progress through the grades.
Instruments and Procedures

Design of the Investigation

In the weeks prior to the beginning of the treatment programs, the investigator established the equality between the two groups of children on certain measures. Because all of the children were not reading at the beginning of the school year, a measure of reading readiness was obtained. The classes had participated in a city-wide testing program in October using the Metropolitan Readiness Test, Grade 1, Level 2, Form P. The scores from this battery contained valuable information, since subtests assessed language comprehension, listening skills and auditory discrimination. The tests had been administered under controlled conditions, using proctors, by the individual classroom teachers. When the children's total scores were subjected to statistical analysis, no significant differences were found between them. Refer to Table 3.

In order to determine syntactic maturity and length of compositions, a pretest in oral composition was devised. This pretest was administered in December and was essentially a story-modeling task. The investigator worked with one class at a time for about one hour. She told the children Marjorie Flack's *Ask Mr. Bear*, and produced objects presented in the story from a "story bag" during the telling. Afterwards, the book was shared with the children and a discussion concentrated on what the little boy had to do in order
to get his mother a birthday gift. Each child then told his own story on the theme, "What would you (or any other boy or girl) do if your mother had a birthday?" The children engaged in story illustration and other independent activities while they waited for their turns. The use of a tape recorder saved dictation time, since the children's attention spans were rather short. The investigator asked each child the same questions, for example, "What would happen first?" "What would he, she, or you do then?" "Did anything else happen?" She always made sure that the child was finished and satisfied before he sat down. Some children were not prepared or were not fluent once they began. They were given "another chance" when they were ready.

Later, the stories were transcribed. A first grade teacher who was not involved in the experiment volunteered to listen to the tapes and recheck the transcriptions. Then the compositions were divided into T-units and total words were counted. An index of syntactic maturity was obtained for each child by dividing the total number of words by total number of T-units. As shown in Tables 4 and 5, the differences between the two groups were statistically non-significant on both measures. For examples of scoring of the compositions, refer to Appendix B.

During the first week in January, the Otis-Lennon Mental Ability Test, Elementary Level 1, Form J was administered to both groups. Results indicated that there were
no significant differences between the two groups in mean intelligence quotient. The data are presented in Table 2.

A five month treatment period then intervened for both groups.

During the first week in June, a posttest in oral composition was planned to closely resemble the pretest in form. As in the first dictation task, the children would model a story. The example would be a tale of high interest, definite action, sequence, and resolution of a conflict. There would be sufficient dialogue, simple characters and preferably some repetition of statements. Like *Ask Mr. Bear*, the story of "Henny Penny" was chosen because the children in both groups had not yet heard it, at least not in the past year. The procedure was quite similar to that followed in the pretest, except that the children were given an opportunity to make up rhyming names for their characters before the dictation began. The teacher placed a series of picture cards of story characters on the board as she read the story. This second set of oral compositions required more than twice the time allotment allowed for the first set.

Findings from the two sets of compositions were subjected to statistical analysis by means of the *t* test to determine whether or not significant gains occurred as stated by the two hypotheses in Chapter I.
Criteria for Oral Composition

Very little data on composition tasks for the first grade was found. Therefore, the investigator considered some of the findings from the studies reviewed in Chapter II to form a basis for the dictations to be elicited from the children. For example, Sullivan's experiment (1974) in written composition was done with first graders. On post-test stories, his experimental group had a mean length of 71.4 words, while control group pupils wrote an average of only 24.8 words. Working with second graders, Howell (1956) discovered that dictated compositions were longer than written ones. Harrell (1957) ascertained overall length of stories written or spoken by nine-year-olds after seeing a film. The average story was under two hundred words. The shortest oral story was 121 words; the longest, 649.

That the topic of a writing task has a critical influence upon composition results was demonstrated by Miller and Ney (1968). Cazden (1972) related results of other investigations which showed how oral dictations by young children displayed wide variation in sentence length according to the subject for discussion. Literature was selected as a basis for composition so that all subjects would tell about the same thing. This approach was suggested by Jacobsson (1974), who used it successfully with third graders.
Identification of Data Sources and Population

Characteristics of the Sample

The children in both classes were generally from lower middle class backgrounds. There were seventeen girls and fourteen boys in the experimental group, and seventeen girls and thirteen boys in the control group. Chronological ages were typical of a first grade class. This is indicated in Table 6. About 16 percent of the children in both classes were limited in their command of English, and spoke varied languages, such as Spanish, Korean, Thai and French, at home. About one fourth of the pupils in both classes represented minority groups. Classes in the school are grouped heterogeneously, and the transiency rate is very high. There were children of all ability levels in both groups.

Equating of Groups

The experimental group children had a mean intelligence quotient of 104.64, with a range of 84 to 132. The mean intelligence quotient for the control group was 108.62, with a range of 86 to 128. Table 3 shows the scores of the Otis-Lennon Mental Ability Test, Form J. There was no significant difference in intelligence quotient scores between the two groups.

Reading readiness and quantitative concepts were evaluated by means of raw score totals on the Metropolitan
Table 2
Comparison of Mean Intelligence Quotient Scores: Experimental and Control Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intelligence Quotient</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>104.64</td>
<td>12.17</td>
<td>1.293 (n.s.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>108.62</td>
<td>12.82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3
Comparison of Mean Readiness Scores: Experimental and Control Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Raw Score</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
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<td>77.9</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>.96 (n.s.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>74.3</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4
Comparison of Pretreatment Mean Scores of Syntactic Maturity: Experimental and Control Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>9.72</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>.108 (n.s.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>9.22</td>
<td>4.63</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5
Comparison of Pretreatment Mean Length of Composition: Experimental and Control Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Words/Composition</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>20.70</td>
<td>8.78</td>
<td>.551 (n.s.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>22.43</td>
<td>14.20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6
Comparison of Sexes and Ages: Experimental and Control Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Mean Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Readiness Test, Form P. The mean for the control group was 77.9, with a range of 40 to 93. The mean for the experimental group was 74.3 with a range of 45 to 93. Table 2 shows that the groups were comparable in readiness skills, with again no statistically significant differences between scores.

Initial syntactic maturity was assessed by mean T-unit length. Pretreatment mean scores for both groups were quite close, as seen in Table 4. The slightly higher average attained by the experimental pupils was not significant, as shown by statistical analysis.

Finally, pretreatment mean length of compositions was determined by counting word totals. On this factor, control pupils showed a slight lead, but statistical analysis disclosed that it was nonsignificant, as seen in Table 5.

Since the two classroom groups were found to be comparable on these four variables, and statistical analysis revealed no significant differences between them, any differences in the posttest scores could be attributed to the experimental (teaching) variable.

**Summary**

The design of the study was considered in Chapter III. The two methodologies employed were described. While one program was viewed as nonanalytic and emphasized expansion of children's linguistic resources, the other was more directive and behavioristic in developing communication
skills. Chapter III revealed that the two groups of children were quite similar in size, intelligence, reading readiness, socioeconomic status, ethnic composition, and ratio of boys to girls. At the outset of the study, differences between the experimental and control groups in mean composition and T-unit length were seen to be nonsignificant. The effects of the treatment variable, then, might be reflected in the posttest results. Chapter IV will present these results and an analysis of the data.
CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

In the preceding chapter, the research design, procedures for conducting testing, and gathering of data were described. This chapter will present the results of the investigation, with an analysis and summary of the data.

In order to test the null hypotheses, the level of significance was established at 5 percent. This level of significance was used because it is "the predetermined level of significance most commonly used in the field of education and will decrease the probability of a Type I error" (Ary, et al., 1972). The index used to find the significance of the difference between the means of the two samples was the $t$ test for independent samples. These samples, or groups, are referred to as independent because they were drawn independently from a population without any pairing or other relationship between them, as demonstrated in Chapter III.

Presentation of Data

The experimental and control groups were shown to be equivalent on measures of intelligence quotient and reading readiness as shown by Tables 2 and 3. At the beginning of the study, no significant differences were found between the
groups in their level of syntactic maturity, as well as length of composition (Tables 4 and 5). The results of the treatment variable are reflected in Tables 7 and 8. Post-treatment mean scores for T-unit length were subjected to the t test. When pretest scores for mean T-unit length were compared with posttreatment scores, the differences for both groups were found to be nonsignificant. The children apparently did not exhibit any growth on this measure.

In mean length of composition, on the other hand, Table 7 shows that both groups clearly made gains. The increases of the experimental group surpass those of the control group, with results significant at the .001 level of significance. The experimental group attained a mean of 246.96 words, while the control group mean was 132.26.

Analysis of Data

The first null hypothesis of this study stated that there would be no significant differences between the group using the Nebraska Curriculum and those using the Ginn approach in syntactic maturity, as measured by mean length of T-units. Results of posttest oral dictations indicate that this null hypothesis can be accepted at the .05 level of significance. The second null hypothesis stated that there would be no significant differences between the two groups in mean length of composition. In this instance, the posttest compositions of the experimental subjects were
### Table 7
Comparison of Posttreatment Mean Scores of Syntactic Maturity: Experimental and Control Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Words/Composition</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>8.83</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>1.178 (n.s.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8.50</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 8
Comparison of Posttreatment Mean Length of Composition: Experimental and Control Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Words/Composition</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>246.96</td>
<td>67.97</td>
<td>5.769 p&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>132.26</td>
<td>76.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
significantly longer. The second null hypothesis is rejected.

The results of the composition tasks may be interpreted as manifesting the effects of the story-modeling technique, along with maturity and increase in attention span. Initially, when children did not speak at length, they did not develop a story with a logical plot. Their sentences and T-units were longer. As story length increased, and dialogue was incorporated into the narration, a greater variety of sentences was used. Some were a few words, such as "He said, 'Yes.'" In this way, T-units became more compact. When these findings are compared with normative data collected by Fox (1972) and O'Donnell, et al. (1967), both groups of children in the present study surpass the means for first graders (Table 9). In Fox's study, mean T-unit length was 7.6, while O'Donnell, et al. reported a mean of 7.97. Children dictated stories about films they had viewed, but with no sound or narration on which to model their own sentences.

In this study, the children in the experimental class showed a maximum length of 44 words on the pretest and 419 words on the posttest. They had learned to develop the concept of sequence and to structure their stories so that nearly all displayed a definite beginning, middle or conflict, and conclusion or resolution of conflict. Children in the control class were able to develop and relate a narrative, but not to the same degree. Many of their
Table 9
Comparison of the Experimental and Control Group's Posttreatment Scores with Normative Data of Other Researchers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Mean T-unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Donnell, et al. (1967)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fox (1972)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
tales did not bring the action to a close. Moreover, their stories were not as innovative. There was a tendency, as exemplified in Appendix B, for these children to retell the same story they had heard. It should be emphasized that quality of the child's work was not evaluated, and a relationship between quality and story length is not being assumed.

One cannot infer that similar results would occur if written compositions were assigned. Data from Harrell (1957), Howell (1957) and Sullivan (1974) suggest that compositions would be shorter, while sentences and clauses, hence T-units, would be longer and more complex. The mean achieved by the experimental group in the present study (246) is close to the mean for oral stories dictated by nine-year-olds in Harrell's experiment (231).

The high degree of growth which occurred in composition length was not anticipated by the investigator. This growth might also be attributed to the rapid increase in linguistic maturity and great spurts in cognitive development which occur in children at this age level. These developmental trends were noted by McCarthy (1954), Gardner and Gardner (1971), and Fox (1972). Nevertheless, the children who were exposed to a literature approach exhibited a superiority in ability to compose and complete a story. Exposure to a variety of literary genres and language exercises, as afforded by the Nebraska program, did not seem to influence the children's syntactic maturity. However,
the gains made by the children who experienced the Nebraska approach reflect well on its use as a tool to enable young children to sustain communication with facility and to structure their expression in an orderly way.

Summary

In Chapter IV, the data from the study were presented and analyzed. The first null hypothesis was accepted. Analysis of T-unit scores revealed that there were no significant differences between the two groups in syntactic maturity. The second null hypothesis was rejected. There were differences between the two groups in length of compositions, significant at the .001 level of confidence. The Nebraska Curriculum, then, would seem to provide opportunities for practice through which first graders may improve their skill in organizing and dictating creative compositions of increasing length and complexity. Some conclusions and further implications will be examined in Chapter V.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The aim of this study was to measure the effects of two different English programs on first grade children's oral compositions. The experimental group used *A Curriculum for English* (University of Nebraska Curriculum Development Center), and the control group was instructed using *Ginn Elementary English*. The subjects were found to be comparable in syntactic maturity, as measured by mean length of T-unit, and composition length, measured by counting word totals. Oral compositions of the subjects were analyzed before and after the treatment periods. The question submitted was, would the use of the experimental approach enable children to compose longer stories with longer T-units? An analysis of the data from posttest compositions, presented in the last chapter, showed that the experimental group did not make significant gains in T-unit length over the control group. In length of composition, the experimental group made gains over the control group, with highly significant results ($p < .001$).
Conclusions

Contrary to the findings reported by Thompson (1967), Sebesta (1967), Nemanich (1967), and Jacobsson (1974), the children in the present study who were exposed to the Nebraska Curriculum did not progress more rapidly toward adult syntactic models than did those using a traditional program. Thompson's subjects were in grades 3 and 6. Sebesta and Nemanich studied the writings of pupils in grades 2 through 6, while Jacobsson worked with third graders. The first grade program in the Nebraska Curriculum appeared to be successful in teaching composition form through literary models. The children displayed an awareness of prose style. However, if syntactic patterns in the literature were brought to the conscious level, they were not accompanied by a concrete plan for teaching the various ways that structures can be expanded and combined. At this grade level, the curriculum does not deal with the direct teaching of writing more complex structures. There are several lessons in sentence-combining, but these could not be successfully used with children who were only beginning to read. Moreover, as Chomsky (1969) has pointed out, some structures are imperfectly understood by children as old as age nine and beyond. The Nebraska approach did appear to be successful in helping children to speak in complete sentences and in motivating them to compose novel stories.
The critical factor seemed to be story-modeling. This technique enabled the children to absorb the forms which they heard in the literature. According to Moffett (1968), this is a desirable starting point in helping children to recombine the vocabulary, locutions and language structures into their own storytelling, and later, story-writing. The T-unit measure, which was shown to be a valid overall index of syntactic maturity, did not seem to account for the variation in sentence pattern or the subtleties of language found in the literature and employed by the children. Perhaps, as stated by Cazden, the T-unit mean length, like sentence utterance, "remains at best a superficial index of language maturity, masking interesting individual differences in child language" (1972:252).

In view of these considerations, the Nebraska approach may be said to furnish a program for exposing first grade children to the literary heritage of books and an inductive method for the discussion of literature. Moreover, it is an effective vehicle for teaching creative composition, developing sentence variety, and enriching the linguistic repertoire of young children.

Recommendations

For Further Research

The following recommendations are suggested for further research.
1. A longitudinal study with the same subjects would indicate whether or not syntactic maturity is more amenable to acceleration as children mature.

2. A statistical study using this approach is recommended with primary children whose first language is not English, or children who are linguistically different.

3. A study involving older and younger children in oral composition is recommended.

4. A future experimental study might compare the Nebraska program with another literature-based program in the area of composition.

For Teachers

On the basis of the findings and conclusions of this study, the following are recommended for classroom implementation:

1. Story modeling is a valuable technique which can be used to enable children to incorporate structure, coherence, dialogue and vocabulary into their own creative expression.

2. Since children recognize and assimilate the sentence structure and arrangement found in fine literature, sentences from the literature read in class should be used in language exercises.
3. Planned oral experiences with the language of stories, especially the repetitive lines occurring in folk tales, will enhance the language repertoire of children at the primary level.

4. Children's feeling for plot, sequence, climax, conclusion and inference should be developed by the repeated composing of stories based on a literary model.

5. Oral composing and dictation should precede creative writing experiences in the primary grades. Later on, opportunities for both oral and written storytelling might be provided concurrently.

6. Children will need to be encouraged to innovate on a variety of story motifs if they are to avoid direct imitation and develop elements of individuality, mood, characterization, humor and style.
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APPENDIX A

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL UNITS
(Nebraska Curriculum)
### ELEMENTARY SCHOOL UNITS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>FOLK</th>
<th>FANCIFUL</th>
<th>ANIMAL</th>
<th>ADVENTURE</th>
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<td>Little Tim and the Brave Sea</td>
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<td>Sambo</td>
<td>The Elephant's Child</td>
<td>Captain</td>
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<td>The Gingerbread Boy</td>
<td>Where the Wild Things Are</td>
<td>How the Rhinoceros Got His Skin</td>
<td>The Little Island</td>
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<td>Little Red Riding Hood</td>
<td>And to Think</td>
<td>Blaze and the Forest Fire</td>
<td>The Bears on Hernlock Mountain</td>
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<td>That I Saw</td>
<td>How Whale Got His Throat</td>
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<td>It on Mulberry Street</td>
<td>The Beginning of the Armadillos</td>
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<td>The Blind Colt</td>
<td>Winnie-the-Pooh</td>
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<td></td>
<td>or the Little Glass Slipper</td>
<td>Brothers Madeline</td>
<td>How the Leopard Got His Hump</td>
<td>Mr. Popper's Penguins</td>
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<td>Mother Holle</td>
<td>Madeleine's Rescue</td>
<td>How the Leopard Got His Spots</td>
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<td>The Sing-Song of Old Kangaroo</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>Charlotte's Web</td>
<td>Brighty of the Grand Canyon</td>
<td>Homer Price</td>
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<td>5</td>
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## ELEMENTARY SCHOOL UNITS - Continued

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<td>The Dog and the Shadow</td>
<td>A Pair of</td>
<td>Red Clogs</td>
<td>They Were Strong and Good</td>
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<td>Butterflies</td>
<td>The Town</td>
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<td>The Story of the First</td>
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<td>The Hare and the Tortoise</td>
<td>Crow Boy</td>
<td>Caroline and Her Kettle</td>
<td>Ride on the Wind</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Daedalus and Icarus</td>
<td>Chanticler and the Fox</td>
<td>The Red Balloon</td>
<td>The Courage of Sarah Columbus</td>
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<td>Narcissus</td>
<td>Musicians of Bremen</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Hiawatha's Fasting</td>
<td>Jacobs: The Fables of</td>
<td>A Brother for the Orphe-</td>
<td>Little House Willa</td>
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<td>Bidpai Fables</td>
<td>The Door in the Wall</td>
<td>Children of the Covered Wagon</td>
<td>Dr. George Washington Carver, Scientist</td>
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<td>Jataka Tales</td>
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<td>Atalanta's Race</td>
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<td>Jason</td>
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<td>The Labors of Hercules</td>
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<td>The Children of Odin</td>
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<td>The Hobbit</td>
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<td>Secret of the Andes</td>
<td>Noble Knights</td>
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</table>

**CORRELATIVE UNITS:** "You Come Too" - Poetry of Robert Frost - Grade 6; Poetry for the Elementary Grades; Language Explorations for Elementary Grades.
APPENDIX B

ANALYSIS OF COMPOSITION AND SCORING:

EXPERIMENTAL AND CONTROL GROUPS
ANALYSIS OF COMPOSITIONS AND SCORING

In this section, examples of the oral compositions dictated by two different children during the experiment are given. Both are girls of above average intelligence and reading ability, and scored high on the pretest measures of syntactic maturity and composition length. Samples of their work were taken at one month intervals, in response to hearing the same literature stories. The method of T-unit analysis was adapted from the work of Hunt (1965), Jung (1971) and Jacobsson (1974). Some comments are offered regarding the development of sequence, structure, style and the like. Slash (/) indicates end of T-unit.

The Control Group: Subject 1

Pretest

My sister and me are going to save my money and get my mom a ring and a necklace and a watch.

Summary

1 sentence
1 T-unit
22 words total
22 words average T-unit

The subject made one statement and did not attempt to assimilate events from the model story. No dialogue or descriptive words.

February 11

There once was a girl, and she's trying to pull out a carrot, and she told her mother to help her. And then the dog came and helped her and then it came out.

1. There once was a girl,/ and she's trying to pull out a carrot,/ and she told her mother to help her./

1 sentence; 3 T-units; 22 words total, 5, 9, and 8.

2. And then a dog came and helped her/ and then it came out./

1 sentence; 2 T-units; 13 words total, 8 and 5.
Summary

2 sentences
5 T-units
35 words total
7.0 words average T-unit
5 words per T-unit minimum
9 words per T-unit maximum

Subject is beginning to use sequence. Story is
longer but T-units are shorter. Coordinates with "and,"
gives a summary with no dialogue.

March 17

There once was a princess, and then there was a
mother, and she came to help the princess out of the tree.
And the princess gave her a new house.

1. There once was a princess,/ and then there was a
mother,' and she came to help the princess out of
the tree./

1 sentence; 3 T-units; 22 words total, 5, 6, and 11.

2. And the princess gave her a new house./

1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 8 words total.

Summary

2 sentences
4 T-units
29 words total
7.25 words average T-unit
5 words per T-unit minimum
11 words per T-unit maximum

This composition not quite as long as the previous
one. T-unit length is about the same, "and" is still
the only transitional word. Uses one adjective
("new"). Lacks dialogue, does not explain how the
girl got to be in a tree or how the mother helped
her down.

April 21

There once was a little girl and her mother was
having a party, and she told the chicken, "Would you help
me?" And she told him, "What can I get for my mother's
birthday?" He said, "You want a watch?" She said, "Yes."
1. There once was a little girl/ and her mother was having a party,/ and she told the chicken, "Would you help me?"/
   1 sentence; 3 T-units; 22 words total, 6, 7, and 9.
2. And she told him, "What can I get for my mother's birthday?"/
   1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 12 words total.
3. He said, "You want a watch?~/
   1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 6 words total.
4. She said, "Yes."/
   1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 3 words total.

Summary

4 sentences
6 T-units
43 words total
7.17 average T-unit
3 words per T-unit minimum
12 words per T-unit maximum

The story is longer than any other. She uses dialogue directly for the first time. T-unit length is maintaining itself in last three stories. Lacks a conclusion. More compounding of T-units with "and."

May 19

There once was a tiger, and it got caught. And then there came a bird, and it helped the tiger out. Then when the bird got caught, he helped the bird. Then he said, "Thank you."/

1. There once was a tiger,/ and it got caught./
   1 sentence; 2 T-units; 9 words total, 5 and 4.
2. And then there came a bird,/ and it helped the tiger out./
   1 sentence; 2 T-units; 12 words total, 6 and 6.
3. Then when the bird got caught,/ he helped the bird./
   1 sentence; 2 T-units; 10 words total, 6 and 4.
4. Then he said, "Thank you."

1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 5 words total.

Summary

4 sentences
6 T-units
36 words total
6.0 average T-unit
5 words per T-unit minimum
10 words per T-unit maximum

The stories do not show a trend toward length. This one has the shortest T-units of all. She makes use of initial adverbial "Then." Does not describe action in any detail, but has a definite conclusion.

Posttest

Once a time a goose was picking up apples, and one apple fell on his head, and he said the sky was falling, he's going to tell the farmer. And he met Piggy Wiggy. And Piggy Wiggy said, "Where are you going?" And Goosey Loosey said, "I'm going to tell the farmer that the sky is falling." And then they both went along and they met Doggy Woggy. And then Doggy Woggy said, "Where are you going, Piggy Wiggy and Goosey Loosey?" And he said, "I'm going to tell the farmer the sky is falling." And Doggy Woggy said, "Can I come with you?" And they said, "Yes." And that's the end.

1. Once a time a goose was picking up apples,/ and one apple fell on his head,/ and he said the sky was falling,/ he's going to tell the farmer./

1 sentence; 4 T-units; 30 words, 9, 7, 7, and 7.

2. And he met Piggy Wiggy./

1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 5 words total.

3. And Piggy Wiggy said, "Where are you going?"

1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 8 words total.

4. And Goosey Loosey said, "I'm going to tell the farmer that the sky is falling."

1 sentence, 1 T-unit; 16 words total.

5. And then they both went along/ and they met Doggy Woggy./

1 sentence; 2 T-units; 11 words, 6 and 5.
6. And then Doggy Woggy said, "Where are you going, Piggy Wiggy and Goosey Loosey?"
   1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 14 words total.
7. And he said, "I'm going to tell the farmer the sky is falling."
   1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 14 words total.
8. And Doggy Woggy said, "Can I come with you?"
   1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 9 words total.
9. And they said, "Yes."
   1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 4 words total.
10. And that's the end.
    1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 5 words total.

Summary

10 sentences
14 T-units
117 words total
8.36 average T-unit
4 words per T-unit minimum
16 words per T-unit maximum

This final composition is about five times as long as the pretest story. There are ten times as many T-units; thus, the average length has fallen sharply. She employs the plot and dialogue of the model story to attain sentence variety, but still persists in using the initial "And." Most of the sentences contain only one T-unit. All are simple or compound structures. Mean T-unit length is longest of any in which modeling has been attempted. There is no resolution of the problem; the story "stops in the middle."

The Experimental Group: Subject 2

Pretest

I would ask my Dad if I can have some money for a present. I would go to the store and buy my mom a diamond necklace and maybe a dress, too.
1. I would ask my Dad if I can have some money for a present./
   1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 14 words total.
2. I would go to the store and buy my mom a diamond necklace and maybe a dress, too./
   1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 18 words total.

**Summary**

2 sentences
2 T-units
32 words total
16.0 average T-unit
14 words per T-unit minimum
18 words per T-unit maximum

The story describes two events, does not follow the stages mentioned in the model story. Both sentences are long and begin with "I would." No dialogue. Uses adjective "diamond." Subjunctive clause with "if."

**February 11**

There was this girl and boy who planted a carrot. And they didn't get it out, so they told their dog to get it out. And he digged and digged and he pulled it out.

1. There was this boy and girl who planted a carrot./
   1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 10 words total.
2. And they didn't get it out, so they told their dog to get it out./
   1 sentence; 2 T-units; 16 words total, 7 and 9.
3. And he digged and digged and he pulled it out./
   1 sentence; 2 T-units; 10 words, 5 and 5.

**Summary**

3 sentences
5 T-units
35 words total
7.2 average T-unit
5 words per T-unit minimum
10 words per T-unit maximum
Slightly longer than pretest story, with long sentences coordinated by "so" and "and," and more T-units per sentence. T-unit average has lost ground as she puts together a narrative with more sequence. Has not begun to make use of dialogue. Uses the relative clause with "who."

March 17

A princess fell in the bushes. And then a boy came and helped her out. And then the boy said, "What would you give me if I would take you out of the bush?" And then she said, "A jacket." And then he said, "Thank you, but I already have a jacket." And then a horse came and then he helped her out. She gave him a straight tail.

1. A princess fell in the bushes./
   1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 6 words total.

2. And then a boy came and helped her out./
   1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 9 words total.

3. And then the boy said, "What would you give me if I would take you out of the bush?"/
   1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 6 words total.

4. And then she said, "A jacket."/
   1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 6 words total.

5. And then he said, "Thank you, but I already have a jacket."/
   1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 12 words total.

6. And then a horse came/ and then he helped her out./
   1 sentence; 2 T-units; 11 words total, 5 and 6.

7. She gave him a straight tail./
   1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 6 words total.

Summary

7 sentences
9 T-units
63 words total
7.67 average T-unit
5 words per T-unit minimum
19 words per T-unit maximum
Longest story thus far dictated. Most sentences have one T-unit, begin with "And then." Uses dialogue for the first time. Displays a sequence quite similar to the model story.

April 21

Once upon a time there was a little girl, and her mom was having a birthday, so she told a goose, "I need help," the little girl says. And the goose says, "How about some carrots and apples and peas?" Then he gave her a little basket, and then she gave it to her mom. And then after she ate it, then she thanked the goose.

1. Once upon a time there was a little girl, and her mom was having a birthday, so she told a goose.
   1 sentence; 3 T-units; 21 words total, 9, 7, and 5.

2. "I need help," the little girls says.
   1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 7 words total.

3. And the goose says, "How about some carrots and apples and peas?"
   1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 12 words total.

4. Then he gave her a basket, and then she gave it to her mom.
   1 sentence; 2 T-units; 14 words total, 6 and 8.

5. And then after she ate it, then she thanked the goose.
   1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 11 words total.

Summary

5 sentences
8 T-units
66 words total
8.25 average T-unit
5 words per T-unit minimum
11 words per T-unit maximum

Story length and T-unit both getting longer. Adjective "little" used three times. Initial adverbial clause "And then after. . ." appears for the first time.
May 19

Once there was a giraffe and a dog. One time the dog in the forest went through his legs, and he didn't want to eat any dog today. And then he went over to him and he said, "Thank you for your kindness. I'll help you someday, too." And then he left. And then he went away. And then he heard something. He wanted to go and see it. And he caught in a trap. And then the dog helped him. And then he bited off the string. And then they were great friends and they lived happily ever after.

1. Once there was a giraffe and a dog./  
   1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 8 words total.

2. One time the dog in the forest went through his legs,/ and he didn't want to eat any dog today./  
   1 sentence; 2 T-units; 21 words total, 11 and 10.

3. And then he went over to him/ and he said, "Thank you for your kindness./  
   1 sentence; 2 T-units; 15 words, 7 and 8.

4. I'll help you someday, too."/  
   1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 6 words total.

5. And then he left./  
   1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 4 words total.

6. And then he went away./  
   1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 5 words total.

7. And then he heard something./  
   1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 5 words total.

8. He wanted to go and see it./  
   1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 7 words total.

9. And he caught in a trap./  
   1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 6 words total.

10. And then the dog helped him./  
   1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 6 words total.
11. And then he bited off the string./

   1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 7 words total.

12. And then they were great friends/ and they lived happily ever after./

   1 sentence; 2 T-units; 12 words total, 6 and 6.

Summary

12 sentences
15 T-units
100 words total
6.67 average T-unit
4 words per T-unit minimum
11 words per T-unit maximum

Excessive use of adverbial "And then." Also uses "One time" and adverbs "today," "happily" and "some­day." Adjectives "great" and the phrase "in the forest" help to lengthen clauses. Again a lengthening trend is seen, but the T-unit has shortened with so many brief statements of action. Best development of plot so far.

Posttest

Once upon a time there was a pig named Piggy Wiggy. And she was sitting under an acorn tree, and it fell and drilled in the ground. And then she said, "Someone's drilling the ground." And she went to tell her mother. She walked along, and then she saw Ducky Lucky. Ducky Lucky said, "Can I go with you?" She said, "Yes." And then they walked along. And then they saw Doggy Woggy. And Doggy Woggy said, "Piggy Wiggy and Ducky Lucky, can I go with you?" And they said, "Yes, you may, Doggy Woggy." And then they walked along again. And then they saw Pony Wony. And then Pony Wony said, "Doggy Woggy, Piggy Wiggy and Ducky Lucky, can I come with you?" And they said, "Yes, you may, Pony Wony." And then they started traveling along, and then they saw Tiger Wiger. And Tiger Wiger said, "Where are you going, Doggy Woggy, Piggy Wiggy, Pony Wony and Ducky Lucky?" And Doggy Woggy said, "We're all going to tell my mother that someone is drilling the ground." And he said, "She's not in Las Vegas. She's in Canada. She told me." And then they traveled along, and then he said, "I know a short cut to there in a deep, dark hole." So they went there, and Doggy Woggy went first, and then Ducky Lucky and Piggy Wiggy and Pony Wony. And then Pony Wony heard Ducky Lucky screamed. So Pony Wony told Doggy Woggy to come with him, and they ran away. And then they took a plane to Las Vegas, and then they went there. Then they told her mother
that someone was drilling the ground. And then she said, "Weren't you standing under an acorn tree?" And she said, "Yes." And then did something drilled go down the ground?" And she said, "Why, yes." And then that's the end.

1. Once upon a time there was a pig named Piggy Wiggy./
   1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 11 words total.

2. And she was sitting under an acorn tree,/ and it fell and drilled in the ground./
   1 sentence; 2 T-units; 16 words total, 8 and 8.

3. And then she said, "Someone's drilling the ground."/
   1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 9 words total.

4. And she went to tell her mother./
   1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 7 words total.

5. Her mother was in Las Vegas./
   1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 6 words total.

6. She walked along,/ and then she saw Ducky Lucky./
   1 sentence; 2 T-units; 9 words total, 3 and 6.

7. Ducky Lucky said, "Can I go with you?"/
   1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 8 words total.

8. She said, "Yes."/
   1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 3 words total.

9. And then they walked along./
   1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 5 words total.

10. And then they saw Doggy Woggy./
    1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 6 words total.

11. And Doggy Woggy said, "Piggy Wiggy and Ducky Lucky, can I go with you?"/
    1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 14 words total.

12. And they said, "Yes, you may, Doggy Woggy."/
    1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 8 words total.
13. And then they walked along again.
1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 6 words total.

14. And then they saw Pony Wony.
1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 6 words total.

15. And then Pony Wony said, "Doggy Woggy, Piggy Wiggy, and Ducky Lucky, can I go with you?"
1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 17 words total.

16. And they said, "Yes, you may, Pony Wony."
1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 8 words total.

17. And then they started traveling along, and then they saw Tiger Wiger.
1 sentence; 2 T-units; 12 words total, 6 and 6.

18. And Tiger Wiger said, "Where are you going, Doggy Woggy, Piggy Wiggy, Pony Wony and Ducky Lucky?"
1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 17 words total.

19. And Doggy Woggy said, "We're all going to tell my mother that someone is drilling the ground."
1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 18 words total.

20. And he said, "She's not in Las Vegas."
1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 9 words total.

21. She's in Canada.
1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 4 words total.

22. She told me."
1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 3 words total.

23. And then they traveled along, and then he said, "I know a short cut to there in a deep, dark hole."
1 sentence; 2 T-units; 21 words total, 5 and 16.

24. So they went there, and Doggy Woggy went first, and then Ducky Lucky and Piggy Wiggy and Pony Wony.
1 sentence; 2 T-units; 19 words total, 4 and 15.
25. And then Pony Wony heard Ducky Lucky screamed. / 
1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 8 words total.

26. So Pony Wony told Doggy Woggy to come with him, / and they ran away. / 
1 sentence; 2 T-units; 14 words total, 10 and 4.

27. And then they took a plane to Las Vegas, / and then they went there. / 
1 sentence; 2 T-units; 14 words total, 9 and 5.

28. Then they told her mother that someone was drilling the ground. / 
1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 11 words total.

29. And then she said, "Weren't you standing under an acorn tree? / 
1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 12 words total.

30. And she said, "Yes." / 
1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 4 words total.

31. "And then did something drilled go down the ground? / 
1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 9 words total.

32. And she said, "Why, yes." / 
1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 5 words total.

33. And then that's the end. / 
1 sentence; 1 T-unit; 6 words total.

**Summary**

33 sentences
40 T-units
325 words total
8.13 average T-unit
3 words per T-unit minimum
18 words per T-unit maximum

This final dictation is over three times longer than any other. She borrowed from the plot and dialogue in "Henny Penny," but did more innovating than the control group children, as in the first child's sample. Sentence is quite
varied, but structure is simple, straight narrative often using the "And then" exhibited in previous stories. Describes the hole as "deep, dark." Uses adverbs "along" and "again." The mean T-unit has contracted because of dialogue containing 3 and 4 words per sentence. She confused Pony Wony with the protagonist, Piggy Wiggy, which some other children did because they had no written cues to help them.

Other Examples of Pre- and Posttest Compositions

In this section, the dictated compositions have been transcribed. T-units have been indicated by a slash (/) at the endpoint. No sentence-by-sentence analysis is given, other than number of sentences, number of words, number of T-units and average length of T-unit. A few comments regarding each story are given. The first two subjects (#3 and #5) in each group are boys who have Spanish-speaking backgrounds and did not speak English before entering school. The second subjects in each group (#4 and #6) are children of average ability whose stories illustrate the kind of growth in plot and fluency discussed in Chapter IV.

The Control Group: Subject 3

Pretest

I would give her a warm jacket and some clothes and a television./

Summary

1 sentence
1 T-unit
13 words total
13 words average T-unit.

One statement describing action. No modeling of story. Uses adjectives warm, some.

Posttest

When they were walking home,/ and this nut fell on the head,/ and they went to go tell the man over the rubber band store./ And when they went they met Catsy Patsy./ And when they went they saw a girl walking home./ And then the girls said, "Can I come along?"/ And they said, "Yes."/ And then they went along and met Pitsy Witsy./ And when
they went they said, "Can I come along?"/ And then they said, "Yes."/ And then they met Petsy Hetsy./ And then when they went they said, "Can I come along?"/ And they said, "Yes."/ And then they met Sitsy Hitsu./ And when they went they went to the sore,/ and then they told the man, "The sky is falling down."/ And the man said, "It wasn't the sky,/ it was the nut."/

Summary

15 sentences
16 T-units
140 words total
8.75 average T-unit

Much longer story with plot and dialogue. Relies on introductory "And then they," "And then when."
Uses ambiguous pronoun "they" for all antecedents.
Changed the ending so that no one was hurt.

The Control Group: Subject 4

Pretest

One day I was walking with my friend./ We were going a long ways,/ and then we went to the store and bought our present for my mom./ And then we came to his house,/ and we wrapped it up./ It was a flower./

Summary

4 sentences
6 T-units
44 words total
7.33 average T-unit

Shows a sequence of events. Uses adverbials "with my friend," "a long ways."

Posttest

Once upon a time there was a cow walking down the hill./ He met a chicken and he said, "The sky is going to fall./ So let's go tell the king./ Can I come along with you?"/ A turkey came along and said, "The sky is going to fall./ So let's go down to the king."/ Then he said, "Can I come along with you?"/ He said, "Yes."/ A duck came along./ "The sky is going to fall./ Let's go down to tell the king."/ So he said, "Can I come along?"/ And he said, "Yes."/ They went along in the woods and met a little bird, who said, "Let's go walking down in the woods, playing with
the other animals."/ A fox was coming out/ and he bit his head off/ and then he said, "Ouch!"/ And then he bit the other one, "Ouch!"/ And the other one, "Ouch!"/

Summary
18 sentences
18 T-units
162 words total
9.0 average T-unit

Longer than average T-units, using "Once upon a time," "in the woods," "down the hill." Relative clause begins with "who said. . . ." Did not make up rhymes for names. Followed the structure of events in model story without giving much detail.

The Experimental Group: Subject 5

Pretest
My mother wants new shoes./

Summary
1 sentence
1 T-unit
5 words total
5 average T-unit

The child was very limited in command of English and extremely shy.

Posttest
Once upon a time there was this Chicky Licky./ And he was looking around at get something to eat,/ and something hit/ and then he said, "Uh, oh, the sky is falling down,/ I must go tell the king."/ And then they run,/ then they go,/ then here's Ducky Lucky./ Then they said, "Where are you going?"/ Chicky Licky said, "The sky is falling./ We must tell the king,/ for he can put it up."/ Then they run/ and then they see Goosey Lucky./ And they say, "Where are you going, Ducky Lucky?"/ Then they say, "The sky is falling down./ We must tell the king/ for he can put it up the sky from falling down./ Then they run, the four./ Then they said, "Where is you going, Ducky Lucky, Goosey Lucky?"/ Then, "The sky is falling down./ We must tell the king, for he can put it up."/ Then they go/ and then saw the Foxy Lucky./ "Where are you going?"/ "The sky is falling down./ We must tell the king, for he can put it up, the sky, from
falling down./ Then somebody said, "I will go first,/ and this is the way where the king live."/ And then there was a wolf./ Then he go whack!/ And then the little chick said, "Whaaaaa!/ And then all run home./ And that's the end of the story."/

Summary

24 sentences
31 T-units
231 words total
7.45 average T-unit

Displays clear understanding of structure and dialogue, with short T-units and a running account of action only. Confuses verb tenses and verb-subject agreement. Attempted rhymes with all names. His story approached average length for the class. T-unit average has grown, but shorter than class average. Added his own dialogue ("I will go first,. . . "] "Whaaaaa!") and words ("Uh, oh," "whack!"). Injected an original idea, that the king can put the sky up again. The chick was killed and the others escaped before his concluding statement.

The Experimental Group: Subject 6

Pretest

I would buy my mom some shoes./ I would ask my sister for some money./

Summary

2 sentences
2 T-units
15 words total
7.5 average T-unit

Shorter than the average story. Sentences are out of sequence.

Posttest

Once upon a time there was a girl named Patty Watty who was at school./ She was looking for a cookie,/ and a nut fell on her head,/ and she was going to tell Mr. Holding./ And she went along/ and then she met Arrie Parrie./ And she said, "Where are you going, Patty Watty?"/ And she said, "I'm going to go tell Mr. Holding that the sky is falling."/ "Can I go?" said Arrie Parrie./ "Sure!/ So they went along and met Snaha Baha./ And Snaha Baha said,
"Where are you going?"/ "We're going to go tell Mr. Holding that the sky is falling down," said Patty Watty and Arrie Parrie./ Snaha Baha said, "Can I go?"/ "Sure," said Arrie Parrie and Patty Watty./ So they went along 'til they met Lisa Bisa./ And Lisa Bisa said, "Where are you going?"/ "We're going to go tell Mr. Holding that the sky is falling."/ "That's not the way to Mr. Holding's office./ I'll show you a better way to his office."/ And they went the other way until they went to a hole, a dark hole./ That was Lisa's house./ "And so we have to go this way to get to Mr. Holding."/ So first went Snaha Baha,/ and Lisa chopped her head off./ And next came Arrie Parrie,/ so they chopped her head off./ And when Patty Watty heard Arrie shout, she ran away./ She never told Mr. Holding that the sky was going to fall./

Summary

25 sentences
29 T-units
235 words total
8.10 average T-unit

T-unit has grown by .6 of a word. Was consistent in her adaptation of characters and events to a school setting. Uses introductory clause "And when . . . ," relative clause "who was at school." Appositive phrase, "a dark hole."