

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS AND
TEACHING EFL COMPOSITION

A General Teaching Model

英文作文研究與教學

T.L. Huang



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英文作文研究與教學

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中華民國七十七年元月初版
行政院新聞局局版台業字第 1452 號

作者：黃 自 來
發行人：戴 奕 煌
發行所：文鶴出版有限公司
地址：台北市和平東路一段 109 號六F
電話：3934497 · 3941791
郵 撥：01079261 號
印刷廠：玉 樹 印 刷 廠

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In recent years the English writing abilities of high school students have become a major national concern. The very nature of the research reported here therefore makes it especially appropriate that these findings and the design for teaching written composition will be used to fill the gap between educational research and the classroom teaching of written English at high schools in Taiwan.

I would like to acknowledge with gratitude the assistance of the following institutions and individuals, without whose support, counsel, and labor, this study could not have been conducted.

Funds for the support of this research were granted by the National Science Council of the Republic of China.

Data for this research were collected from the Annual National English Composition Contest for High School Students held by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of China.

Space does not permit me to mention by name the many students from whom I received compositions and wholehearted cooperation.

Second in importance only to what is owed the students is my indebtedness to Miss Yen Ai-chu and Mr. Huang Dai-fu, who assisted in the seemingly endless task of data tabulation, analyzed each of the 200 compositions, and offered their ideas and helpful comments.

Lastly, my special thanks go to Dr. Michael Miller, visiting professor from Chicago State University, who read the manuscript

1966-3/09

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and offered a number of valuable suggestions.

March 1988

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Writing may be considered the most difficult of the language skills and is thus a valid means for the assessment of the overall foreign language proficiency of learners. In the summer of 1981, the Ministry of Education announced that a test of writing would be incorporated in the Joint College Entrance Examination (JCEE) in the following year. Since then, there have been a succession of books published about the teaching of writing. These books might be of some help to classroom teachers, for they were caught unprepared for the task and were baffled as to what materials and methods they should use in teaching writing, but writing is still inadequately taught in Taiwan. One of the reasons for this is that most high school teachers lack competence in teaching writing. There are myriad problems concerning teaching methods and materials for the composition classes. Teachers generally spend little time teaching the organization of either paragraphs or the whole composition. The current practice of assigning topics and correcting errors by composition teachers often constitutes the whole work of composition instruction. Some teachers may even ask their students to memorize the so-called "Selections of Model English Compositions". They are glad to see students reproduce the "beautiful sentences" from the selections in their own compositions. In this method, the

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emphasis of composition teaching is on rote memorization. Another obstacle to the effective teaching of writing is class size. In Taiwan, English classes are usually large, ranging from 40 to 60 students. The teachers dread the overwhelming work load that goes along with being assigned composition courses, and the students consider writing English compositions an ordeal through which they are forced to suffer.

In the past two decades, there has been a popular interest among teachers and investigators in analyzing language errors made by students in the process of second language learning. "Error Analysis" is the general label for this approach. It aims at systematically describing and explaining errors made by second-language learners. Under this approach, language errors are considered indispensable to the learning process in which learners continuously form hypotheses about the target language and test them. Thus, a learner's errors provide evidence of his transitional competence and his strategies of learning a second language (Corder: 1967). However, recent research shows that Error Analysis has many limitations. Most error analyses result in a classification of deviations from the L2 norm in terms of errors of competence (interlingual and intralingual). Attempts to describe L2 learning phenomena in these terms can lead to some serious problems:

- (1) The distinction between interlingual and intralingual errors has only a limited use (Corder: 1973).
- (2) Some L2 learning phenomena cannot be captured at all by EA (Kellerman: 1977).
- (3) EA does not provide any insight into the course of the L2 learning process (Schachter: 1974; Svartvik: 1973).

Recently, the data scrutinized in error analysis has been expanded to include correct linguistic structures that students produce since error analyses based on error data alone fail to take account of several important factors, for example, students' avoidance strategies. Since these analyses deal with not only the errors but also the correct data, many investigators think that it is more appropriate to use another label for them: "Performance Analyses". The attention of a performance analysis is not simply focused on deviations from the L2 norm (errors) at a given time, but on the process of L2 learning as a whole. More and more researchers tend to be convinced that the language use of L2 learners in each stage of the learning process should be seen as an attempt to apply the structural principles of the target language in a systematic and coherent way (Corder: 1978; Selinker: 1972; Schuman: 1978).

Objectives of the Study

This research project attempts to analyze 200 English compositions written by 200 of our best students who were selected from 100 high schools, both public and private. The data will include errors and examples of correct usage in order to show (1) what students have learned as well as what they have not, (2) the areas where there is still instability, and (3) the extent of the damage, i.e. whether there is misunderstanding of a whole linguistic system or the ignorance or uncertainty is confined to a small part of that system.

This research also attempts to investigate the students'

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performance grammar compared with the corresponding linguistic competence model in terms of structural complexity, derivation, frequency, and the native language of the students.

It is hoped that the empirical information derived in this study will serve as a basis for planning and re-orienting materials preparation and teaching-learning strategies so that high school students may be helped to improve their English writing skills to the level of the linguistic competence model.

Definition of Terms

| | |
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| contrastive analysis (CA) | A systematic comparison of the source language and the target language at all levels of structure which will generate predictions about the areas of learning difficulties in the target language for speakers of the source language. |
| error | A systematic deviation from the accepted system; that is, a linguistic expression which is ill-formed in grammar, meaning, rhetoric or style. |
| error analysis (EA) | A careful study of a large corpus of errors committed by speakers of the source language attempting to express themselves in the target language which provides factual data for developing a syllabus of second-language acquisition. |
| fossilization | Language behavior that has become fixed at |

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| | certain point in development. |
| global error | The type of error that affects the meaning of a sentence or violates rules involving the overall structure of a sentence, the relationships between constituent clauses, or in a simple sentence, the relationships between the major constituents. |
| foreign language (FL) | The language in question that when studied affords insights into the life of another nation; it can be used for the purpose of understanding the culture of another nation. |
| hypothesis | An informed guess made with the help of given information. |
| interference from L1 | The effects of "habit" formed in the speaker's first language as it acts upon the target language. |
| interlanguage (IL) | The language used as the learner progresses from no knowledge at all of the target language to a satisfactory knowledge. The interlanguage is constantly changing. |
| interlingual errors | Errors which reflect faulty generalizations about the rules of the target language. |
| intralingual errors | Errors which reflect the structure of the mother tongue. |
| L1 | First language (usually the mother tongue). |
| L2 | Second language (target language). |
| local error. | The type of error which causes trouble only at particular spots or in a particular constituent of the sentence and which do not |

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| | much affect the overall structure or meaning of the sentence. |
| mistake | A non-systematic deviation from the language systems indicating incomplete learning. |
| learning strategy | Process used by learners (eg. mnemonics) to assist in learning. |
| negative transfer (interference) | Transfer of a skill which impedes the learning or has a negative influence on the command of another skill because of differences between the two skills. |
| overgeneralization | A failure by the learner to apply restrictions where appropriate to the application of a rule. |
| peer checking | Other learners assisting in checking for errors or mistakes, usually in class. |
| performance analysis | An examination of both "correct" and "incorrect" forms used by learners. |
| second language (SL) | A language extensively used for government, business, and/or education within the nation or region where it is learned; it is used as an alternative way of expressing one's own culture. |
| target language (TL) | The language which the learner is learning. |

CHAPTER II LANGUAGE LEARNERS AND THEIR ERRORS

Nature and Aims of EA

Learners make errors and these errors can be observed, analyzed, and classified to reveal something of the system operating within the learner. This fact has led to a surge in the study of learners' errors, called error analysis. Error analysis, unlike contrastive analysis, examines errors attributable to all possible sources, not just those which result from negative transfer of the native language. Error analysis claims that only some of the errors a learner makes are attributable to the mother tongue, that learners do not actually make all the errors that contrastive analysis predicted they should, and that learners from disparate language backgrounds tend to make similar errors in learning the same target language. Errors arise from several possible general sources: interlingual errors of interference from the native language, intralingual errors within the target language, the socio-linguistic context of communication, psycholinguistic or cognitive strategies, and countless affective variables. The aims of error analysis, therefore, are to locate or identify these sources of errors, then describe, explain, evaluate, and at last prevent or correct the errors. All these essential steps constitute the procedures of error analysis. While the nature and quality of the mistakes a learner makes can provide no direct measure of his knowledge of the language, it still probably the most important

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source of information about the nature of his knowledge. From the study of his errors we are able to infer the nature of his knowledge at that point in his learning career and discover what he still has to learn. By describing and classifying his errors in linguistic terms, we can build up a picture of the features of the language which are causing him learning problems. In this respect the information we get is similar to that provided by contrastive analysis. Error analysis thus provides a check on the predictions of bilingual comparisons, and inasmuch as it does this, it is an important additional source of information for the selection of items to be incorporated into the syllabus.

Relationships to CA

In L2 learning, learners regularly produce deviations from the L2 norm. Traditionally, such deviations did not receive much attention; they were labelled as "errors" and were hardly considered as an important issue in language teaching. The audio-lingual method considered pattern drills especially helpful as a remedy against possible errors. When errors occurred, they were invariably attributed to interference from the L1. As a consequence, the linguist's contribution was expected to be in the area of CA. However, at the end of the 1960's, people began to question one of the main objectives of CA, namely the explanation and prediction of L2 learning problems. People began to realize that the approach of contrastive analysis left the learner himself out of consideration. The fact that there was no empirical basis for CA in turn resulted in more attention being paid to error

analysis. The contrastive analysis hypothesis stressed the interfering effects of the first language on second language learning, and claimed, in its strong form, that second language learning is primarily, if not exclusively, a process of acquiring whatever items are different from the first language. Such a narrow view of interference ignored the intralingual effects of learning, among other factors. Recently, teachers and researchers have come to understand that second language learning is a creative process of constructing a system in which the learner is consciously testing hypotheses about the target language from a number of possible sources of knowledge: his limited knowledge of the target language itself, his knowledge about his native language, his knowledge about the communicative function of language, his knowledge about language in general, and his knowledge about life, human beings, and the universe. The learner, in acting upon his environment, constructs what to him is a legitimate system of language in its own right—a structured set of rules which for the time being provide order to the linguistic chaos that confronts him. Thus, by the late 1960's, second language learning began to be examined in much the same way that first language learning had been studied for some time: the learner was looked upon not as a producer of malformed, imperfect language replete with mistakes, but as an intelligent and creative being proceeding through logical, systematic stages of acquisition, creatively acting upon his linguistic environment as he encounters its forms and functions in meaningful contexts. By a gradual process of trial and error and hypothesis testing, the learner slowly and tediously succeeds in establishing closer and closer approximations to the system used by native speakers of the language. In short, we can

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relate error analysis and contrastive analysis in the following way. Contrastive analysis aims to discover the differences between the first and second languages and predicts that there will be learning problems; these problems will manifest themselves as errors. Error analysis, on the other hand, aims to study the nature of these errors first and then it checks to see if these errors confirm or refute the predictions of contrastive analysis.

Interlanguage

With the growing popularity of error analysis in the late 1960s, several linguistic terms were coined to describe the perspective which stressed the legitimacy of learners' second language systems. The best known of these linguistic terms is "interlanguage", which refers to the separateness of a second language learner's system, a system that has a structurally intermediate status between the native and target language. Namser (1971), for example, referred to this same successive approximation to the target language as an "approximate system". Corder (1971: 151) employed the term "idiosyncratic dialect" to connote the idea that the learner's language is unique to a particular individual, that the rules of the learner's language are peculiar to the language of that individual alone. While each of these designations emphasizes a particular notion, they share the concept that the second language learner is forming a self-contained linguistic system. This is neither the system of the native language nor the system of the target language, but instead falls between the two. It is a system based on the best attempt of the learner to

provide order and structure to the linguistic stimuli surrounding him. The interlanguage hypothesis led to a whole new era of second language research and teaching in the early 1970's and represented a significant breakthrough from the shackles of the contrastive analysis hypothesis. According to Richards (1974: 35-37), five psychological processes are central to second language learning; they are: language transfer, transfer of training, strategies of second language learning, strategies of second-language communication and the overgeneralization of TL (Target Language) linguistic material. The most interesting phenomena in IL (Interlanguage) performance are those items, rules, and subsystems which are fossilizable in terms of these five psychological processes. If it can be experimentally demonstrated that fossilizable items, rules and subsystems which occur in IL performance result from the NL (Native Language), then we are dealing with the process of language transfer; if the fossilizations result from identifiable items in training procedures, then we are dealing with the process of transfer of training; if they result from an identifiable approach by the learner to the material to be learned, then we are dealing with strategies of second-language learning; if they result from an identifiable approach by the learner to communication with native speakers of TL, then we are dealing with strategies of second language communication; if they result from a clear overgeneralization of TL rules and semantic features, then we are dealing with overgeneralization of TL linguistic material. Each process forces fossilizable material upon surface IL utterances, controlling to a very large extent the surface structures of these utterances. Combinations of these processes, finally, produce what we might term entirely fossilized IL com-

petence.

Attitudes Toward Learner's Errors

Language learning is like any kind of human learning in that both involve the process of making mistakes. For instance, learning to swim, to play tennis, to ride a bicycle, or to type all involve a process in which the success of learning necessarily benefits from mistakes. The learner utilizes mistakes to obtain feedback from the environment and with that feedback to make new attempts which successively and more closely approximate desired goals. The trial-and-error experience likewise, is an inevitable and beneficial element in the process of first-language learning. The child makes countless mistakes in learning his first language. Many of the mistakes are logical in the limited linguistic system within which the child operates, but by carefully processing feedback from others, the child slowly but surely learns to produce what is acceptable speech in his native language. Second language learning is not unlike first language learning in its trial-and-error nature. It's this point, among others, that teachers of second languages tend to ignore or neglect. To some of these teachers, it is inexcusable to commit such and such mistakes simply because they seem easily avoidable. Thus, whenever students make mistakes, teachers usually feel sad about or angry at them. In fact, teachers should not be saddened by the learner's mistakes because actually these mistakes are natural and valuable. The mistakes the learner makes in learning the second language have substantial significance in many respects.

A learner's errors are significant, first of all, in that they provide to the researcher evidence of how language is learned or acquired, what strategies or procedures the learner is employing in the discovery of the language. In other words, the learner's mistakes serve researchers as keys to the understanding of the process of second-language acquisition. Furthermore, the learner's mistakes tell the teacher, if he undertakes a systematic analysis, how far towards the goal the learner has progressed and what remains for the learner to learn. Still more, the mistakes are indispensable to the learner himself. The making of mistakes can serve as a device the learner uses in order to learn. The mistakes themselves are stepping stones to successful learning.

A correct and useful attitude towards the learner's mistakes is to draw proper distinctions between "mistakes" and "errors". Technically speaking, "mistake" and "error" are two different phenomena. A mistake refers to a performance error that is either a random guess or a "slip", in that it is a failure to utilize a known system correctly. In both native and second language situations, speakers make mistakes not because of a deficiency in competence but because of some sort of breakdown or imperfection in the process of producing speech. Such mistakes, however, should be distinguished from the "errors" made by a second language learner. The latter are idiosyncrasies in the interlanguage of the learner which are direct manifestations of a system with which a learner is operating at the time. An error is a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflecting the interlanguage competence of the learner. In short, "mistakes" refer to those speech products which are the result of chance circumstances and unsystematic performance. "Errors", on the

other hand, pertain to systematic errors of competence; they are the product of the learner's "transitional competence."

Sources of Errors

(1) Interference

Some of the most apparent errors in foreign language communication are those described as instances of language transfer or interference. This may be defined as the use of elements from one language while speaking or writing another. The selection of the following examples is made randomly:

- (1) *He drink a cup of milk every day.
- (2) *He teach English this semester.
- (3) *He have been to Hongkong.
- (4) *He must have see somewhere.
- (5) *You should give me a phone yesterday.

In the above examples, the -s in the third person singular in the present tense or the past principle form -en is omitted, perhaps because the verb inflections are not used in Chinese.

Examples of interference might appear to confirm the claims that have sometimes been made for the possibility of predicting instances of interference by contrasting the grammatical or other systems of two languages. For example, Lado (1957) claimed that we could predict and describe the patterns that would cause difficulty in learning and those that would not cause difficulty by comparing systematically the language and culture

to be learned with the native language and culture of the student.

The instances of interference we have looked at may seem to indicate that second language data can be entirely described in such terms. In analyzing second language data, it is tempting to see all errors as effects of the interference of the mother tongue, ignoring all other relevant phenomena. But there are many other examples of errors that require alternative interpretations.

(2) Overgeneralization

Generalization can be defined as "the use of previously available strategies in new situation." (Jakobovits, 1970:111) In second or foreign language learning some of these strategies will prove helpful in organizing the facts about the target language, but others, perhaps due to superficial similarities, will be misleading and inapplicable.

- (1) *He teaches English this semester.
- (2) *Oh! It rains.
- (3) *Oh! It is raining.
- (4) *You should call me yesterday.

In examples (1) and (2), the Chinese student seems to have generalized the s-form for the third-person singular in the present tense rather than using the idiomatic present participle on-ing form. The use of the s-form may be accounted for by the heavy pressure of other forms which take the verbal ending-s in the third person singular in the present tense. In example (3), he has seemingly used the rule of English structure that if the simple form ends in a single consonant preceded by a single vowel, the consonant is doubled. In example (4), he has apparently applied

the rule that the English past tense form refers to the past time.

In these examples, the Chinese student is not simply transferring the grammar of his mother tongue into English. Instead, he is evidently overusing particular rules of English structure, being guided by what he already knows of English, and by his own intuition. Interference is not involved. As Wolfe (1967) says:

Once the student grasps the idea that the new language differs from his native language in many matters of structure, he will now know when it is safe to operate in terms of his native language and he may try to operate his own structure on the basis of previous contact with the new language. . . . Some students, not knowing a correct form, will make up a form which does not parallel either the native or; the target language. Or a student will persistently fail to make a grammatical distinction in the target language which he actually makes in his mother tongue (p. 181).

Therefore, the psychological parameters in second language learning cannot be identified exclusively with the linguistic ones.

(3) Strategies of Communication and Assimilation

The errors in our examples might also be caused by other factors, not related to interference or to aspects of generalization and analogy.

- (1) *Oh! Rain drop.
- (2) *It is falling rain.
- (3) *He must be see you in some where.
- (4) *He looks like happy, maybe he pass the tes:
- (5) *I heard from a letter yesterday.

In wanting to communicate ideas that are more sophisticated than his level of proficiency in the L2, the learner may be forced to mold whatever he has assimilated of the foreign language into a means of saying whatever he wants to say. He may simplify the syntax of the language in an effort to make the language into an instrument of his own intentions. Errors deriving from such efforts like those found in the examples above may be attributed to strategies of communication.

To reiterate, we have tried to point out the possible sources of errors in order to increase awareness of L2 learning problems. These sources can be divided into three categories:

- (1) Interference: errors resulting from the transfer or grammatical elements from the target language.
- (2) Overgeneralization: errors caused by extension of target language rules to areas where they do not apply.
- (3) Strategies of communication and assimilation: errors caused by the learner's attempts to reduce the learning burden of what he has to assimilate.

Classification of Errors

In any study of error analysis, the errors identified have to be duly classified. This task, however, is by no means an easy one. Very often classes of errors overlap and occasionally some errors simply do not lend themselves to a clearcut categorization. There seem to be no ideal model of classification of the tremendous varieties of errors found in student compositions. All models leak, in one way or another. And, it seems no model

can be as exhaustive and inclusive as it is ideally supposed to be. In this study all errors are first classified into three categories: (I) lexical, (II) grammatical or syntactic, and (III) rhetorical. Subcategories and sub-subcategories in hierarchical structure are subsumed under each of these major headings appropriately. The present classification is based on no other reasons than ease, convenience and clarity of classification. Burt and Kiparsky's (1974) model of dichotomizing errors into local and global ones is consulted but not followed in this study.

Limitations of Error Analysis

Error analysis (EA) has a great deal in common with that type of contrastive analysis (CA) which is based on the examination of language data obtained from the foreign-language users. EA, as the name tells us, is concerned only with the errors. It analyzes only the errors and neglects the careful description of the non-errors. Thus, it is arbitrary and inadequate for the purposes that it is commonly said to have (Hammaberg 1973: 29).

We can never achieve a full explanation of learner's errors by error analysis alone. In EA, as always when data are used, we never know when the sample is sufficiently large. If the sample is not large enough, one cannot expect it to provide complete coverage of possible errors (Lado, 1957). Besides the types and frequencies of learners' errors in EA tests may not be true reflections of learning problems in general. Actually, it is very difficult to generalize about learners' problems by merely observing their mistakes. We cannot claim that the occurrence

or non-occurrence of error and differences in the frequency of error are completely determined by learning problems that are not directly related to the language being studied, since the learner's behavior is also related to his learning experiences. The non-occurrence or low frequency of errors in a certain construction could be due to the fact that this construction has been successfully taught and not to the fact that it is inherently easy. Conversely, a high frequency of errors may result from inadequate teaching materials or methods (Richards, 1973).

Yet, even if a partial analysis obtained from the results of the test under study is insufficient to justify completely the ordering of difficulty and even if EA has its own intrinsic limitations, it still provides enough evidence that error-based analyses are not only fruitful but also necessary to work out and test hypotheses concerning factors that set degrees of difficulty in second language learning at the elementary or intermediate level. This study can be considered as supporting the opinion that difficulty is a function of the number of possible alternatives involved, and psychologically, from the point of view of the learner, difficulty is a function of the awareness of contextual clues. If a teacher himself does not know what is happening, the problem will remain unmanageable, since he will not be able to tell his student exactly what the mistake is that he is making, and furthermore will certainly be unable to plan any teaching strategies for eliminating it.

CHAPTER III DATA ANALYSIS

Subjects

All data are amassed from the English compositions on the two topics "The Wisest Thing I Ever Did" and "On a Rainy Day" written by 200 students who were selected from 100 high schools, both public and private. Each student may be considered one of the best or the best student in English writing within his own school.

Procedure

The first step toward the analysis of composition errors is the correction of the pieces of writing sampled. Here questions may arise regarding how student compositions should be corrected. One crucial problem in the correction of compositions relates to the ultimate question of "right" and "wrong" in language matters, which has long been observed by language teachers, grammarians, and linguists. Another has to do with the extent, degree, or standard to which student compositions should be corrected or improved. While teaching composition remains an art rather than a mechanistic craft, such questions are not to be definitely and satisfactorily answered.

In the present analysis corrections have been made so as to

bring a piece of student writing to a grammatically mistake-free level. Here “grammar” refers to the collection of basic lexical, morphological, syntactic and spelling rules which govern the basic well-formedness of the English sentence, such as those which specify *monthly, *arround, *he have come, *she went to the hospital to look her mother, *although . . . but . . ., etc., as wrong. Besides, violations of logic, misuse of words, incomplete thoughts, and redundancies are also attended to. However, violations of rhetorical principles, defects in style, or improvements for the sake of bringing a piece of student writing to an “elegant,” “beautiful,” or even “perfect” level are not made in order to preserve the original meaning of a piece of writing as much as possible.

Analysis of the Data

The discussion of the data falls into two major parts: firstly, it is focused on the simple sentence (containing only one clause); secondly, attention will be turned to the complex sentence (containing more than one clause). In each section, both the correct usages found and the errors the students committed will be analyzed.

Simple Sentences

A clause is “a unit that can be analyzed into the elements S(ubject), V(erb), C(omplement), O(bject) and A(dverbial).”

(Quirk et al 1972: 343).

It is most important for the students to understand the basic sentence thoroughly, for the basic sentence is the key unit of the English language. Although basic sentences are very simple patterns of phrases, they provide the structure for all of the sentences of English regardless of how complex the sentences may be.

The basic sentence patterns that are possible in English are strictly limited in number. If this were not so, the students would not be able to learn the structure of the English language. But the actual number of basic sentences is virtually unlimited, because we can insert any of thousands of lexical items into a given structure. With the hundreds of thousands of words in English and the many sentences and combinations of sentences that are possible, the number of English sentences is actually infinite. The students can comprehend and produce sentences only if they understand the grammar of English sentences.

As the sentences of English are derived from a limited number of basic patterns, the students have to study the basic rules for forming these patterns. They also have to study the ways these patterns are transformed into more complicated sentences by applying transformational rules. The basic components of the simple sentence consist of the following five basic phrase structure rules (p-s rules):

$$1) \text{ Sentence} \text{ ---} \rightarrow \text{S V (O)} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{C} \\ \text{A} \\ \text{O} \end{array} \right\}$$

$$2) \text{ S} \text{ ---} \rightarrow \text{NP}$$

$$3) V \dashrightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Be} \\ \text{V-b} \\ \text{V-s} \\ \text{VI} \\ \text{VT} \\ \text{VT-d} \\ \text{VT-e} \\ \text{VT-c} \end{array} \right\}$$

$$4) O \dashrightarrow \text{NP}$$

$$5) C \dashrightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{NP} \\ \text{Adj} \end{array} \right\}$$

S: Subject; V: Verb; O: Object; C: Complement; A: Adverb;
 VI: Intransitive Verb; VT: Transitive Verb; NP: Noun Phrase;
 VT-d: VT of double objects; VT-e: VT of elect-type; VT-c: VT
 of consider-type; V-b: Verb of become-type; V-s: Verb of seem-
 type;

Ten type of sentences are derived from the foregoing five p-s rules, that is,

1. NP Be NP (including existential sentences)
2. NP Be Adj
3. NP Be Adv-p
4. NP V-b $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{NP} \\ \text{Adj} \end{array} \right\}$
5. NP V-s Adj
6. NP VI (Adv-m)
7. NP VT NP (Adv-m)
8. NP VT-d NP₁ NP₂
9. NP VT-e NP₁ NP₂
10. NP VT-c NP₁ $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{NP}_2 \\ \text{Adj} \end{array} \right\}$

Five transformations—that is, S-V Inversion, Imperative Reduction, Passivalization, Dative Movement, and There-Inversion—generate interrogative sentences, imperative sentences, passive sentences, and the alternative type of sentence (type 3 and 8).

The discussion of the errors will divide all errors into three major categories: lexical errors, grammatical errors and semantic errors. Lexical errors include spelling, capitalization, morphology, and word compounding. Grammatical errors include verb errors, noun and pronoun errors, adjective and adverb errors, punctuation errors, etc. Semantic errors include Chinese-English and redundancy.

An Overall Description

According to the first classification, of the overall 4560 sentences, 1872 of them are incorrect and 2688, correct. The percentage of the incorrect sentences to the correct ones is 41.05% to 58.95%. In all the sentences collected, complex sentences are used a little more than simple sentences. The percentage of the complex sentences to the simple ones is 56.84% to 43.16%. The error percentages of the two are 32.32% and 47.69%. This result indicates that the subjects have a better command of simple sentences than of complex ones, and that senior high school students' thoughts are complicated enough that simple sentences alone cannot satisfy their needs. Therefore, complex constructions should be given a proper emphasis in teaching procedures. In the complex sentences, the subordination construction is more frequently used than the coordination one. The linking devices

used in the latter contain only four: and, but, or, and Not only... but also. Compared to this, the former construction appears more changeable. But the frequency of error and its percentage in subordination constructions are double those in coordination constructions. This shows that there are more problems in subordination constructions, which deserve more attention from both teachers and students.

For overall statistics of the numbers of sentences used and the numbers of correct and incorrect sentences, see table 1.

Table 1 Correct vs. Incorrect Sentences

| Sentence Type | | Total | | Correct Usage | | Percentage | | Error | | Error Percentage | |
|---------------|---------------|-------|------|---------------|-----|------------|--------|-------|-----|------------------|--------|
| Simple | | 1968 | | 1332 | | 67.68% | | 636 | | 32.32% | |
| Complex | Coordination | 2592 | 816 | 1356 | 396 | 52.31% | 29.20% | 1236 | 420 | 47.69% | 33.98% |
| | Subordination | | 1776 | | 960 | | 70.79% | | 816 | | 66.02% |
| Total | | 4560 | | 2688 | | 58.95% | | 1872 | | 41.05% | |

According to the second classification, of the overall 1872 errors, 349 errors are lexical, 1365 are grammatical and 158 are semantic. For the general distribution of types of errors, see Table 2.

Table 2 General Distribution of Types of Errors

| | Types of Errors | Number of Errors | Percentage |
|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|----------------|
| | Lexical errors | 349 | 18.64% |
| | Grammatical errors | 1365 | 72.91% |
| | Semantic errors | 158 | 8.45% |
| Grammatical errors | Verb | 874 | 46.69% |
| | Noun | 93 | 4.97% |
| | Pronoun | 87 | 4.63% |
| | Adjective | 108 | 5.76% |
| | Adverb | 89 | 4.75% |
| | Preposition | 82 | 4.38% |
| | Conjunction | 81 | 4.30% |
| Lexical errors | Article | 149 | 7.95% |
| | Spelling | 156 | 8.33% |
| | Morphology | 66 | 3.52% |
| | Miscellaneous | 87 | 4.64% |
| | Total | 1872 | 100.00% |

Sentence Distribution

Simple Sentences (Total: 1968)

Table 3

Type 1. NP Be NP (228:11.58%)

| | |
|-----------|-----|
| Correct | 168 |
| Incorrect | 60 |

Table 4

Type 2. NP Be Adj (168: 8.53%)

| | |
|-----------|-----|
| Correct | 124 |
| Incorrect | 44 |

Table 5

Type 3. NP Be Adv-p (22: 1.11%)

| | |
|-----------|----|
| Correct | 16 |
| Incorrect | 6 |

Table 6

Type 4. NP V-b NP (36: 1.82%)

Adj

| | |
|-----------|----|
| Correct | 28 |
| Incorrect | 8 |

Table 7

Type 5. NP V-s Adj (36: 1.82%)

| | |
|-----------|----|
| Correct | 24 |
| Incorrect | 12 |

Table 13

Type 11. Interrogative (Yes-no and WH-) (120: 6.09%)

| | |
|-----------|----|
| Correct | 96 |
| Incorrect | 24 |

Table 14

Type 12. Imperative (24: 1.21%)

| | |
|-----------|----|
| Correct | 18 |
| Incorrect | 6 |

Table 15

Type 13. Passive (144: 7.31%)

| | |
|-----------|----|
| Correct | 98 |
| Incorrect | 46 |

Table 16

Type 14. There Be NP Adv-p (50: 2.54%)

| | |
|-----------|----|
| Correct | 28 |
| Incorrect | 22 |

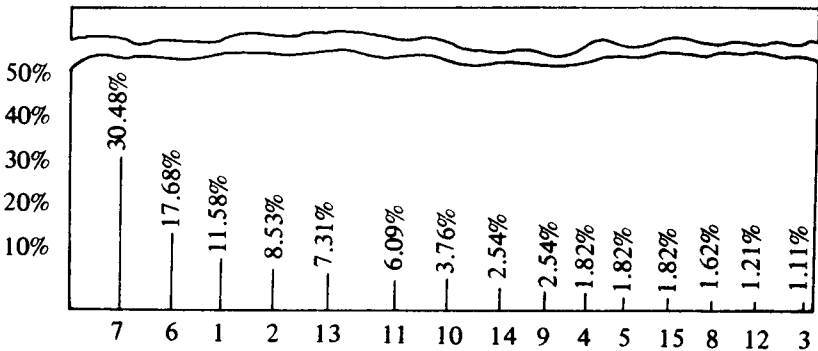
Table 17

Type 15. NP Vt-d NP₂ Prep NP₁ (36: 1.82%)

| | |
|-----------|----|
| Correct | 24 |
| Incorrect | 12 |

The graphic representation of the occurrence of the simple sentence patterns is as below:

Table 18



The most frequently used simple sentence types are: (1) NP VT NP (Adv-m), (2) NP VI (Adv-m), (3) NP Be NP, (4) NP Be Adj, (5) Passive, (6) Interrogative.

Complex Sentences

Table 19

Coordination (816: 29.20%)

| | |
|-----------|-----|
| Correct | 396 |
| Incorrect | 420 |

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Table 20

Subordination (1776: 70.79%)

| Sentence Type \ Number | Correct | Incorrect |
|----------------------------|---------|-----------|
| Sentential Complementizer | 210 | 176 |
| Infinitival Complementizer | 154 | 132 |
| Subordinate Clause | 195 | 126 |
| Cleft & Pseudo-cleft | 120 | 104 |
| Direct/Indirect Clause | 89 | 74 |
| Participial Construction | 120 | 105 |
| Inversion | 72 | 50 |
| Total | 960 | 767 |

Mixed Types

Table 21

(1) Coordination + Coordination (14: 1.71%)

| | |
|-----------|---|
| Correct | 6 |
| Incorrect | 8 |

Table 22

(2) Coordination + Subordination (38: 1.46%)

| | |
|-----------|----|
| Correct | 12 |
| Incorrect | 26 |

Table 23

(3) Coordination + Participial Construction (24: 1.2%)

| | |
|-----------|----|
| Correct | 10 |
| Incorrect | 14 |

Lexical Errors

Of the total 1872 errors, 349 are lexical errors, or 44.69%. These include (1) spelling errors, (2) capitalization errors, (3) word compounding errors, and (4) morphological errors. For their statistics, see table 24:

Table 24 Percentage of Lexical Errors

| Types of Lexical Errors | Simple sentence | Complex sentence | Total | Percentage |
|-------------------------|-----------------|------------------|-------|------------|
| Spelling | 58 | 58 | 156 | 44.69% |
| Capitalization | 97 | 4 | 101 | 28.93% |
| Word-compounding | 11 | 15 | 26 | 7.44% |
| Morphology | 24 | 42 | 66 | 18.91% |
| Total | 190 | 159 | 349 | 100.00% |

Spelling

Generally speaking, spelling is not a big problem for these students. Their writing indicates that most of them have a quite large vocabulary and can spell complex words, such as benevol-

ence, obstacle, melancholy, trepidation, etc., correctly. Some even used a few political names, which indicates their interest in current events, such as the Soviet leader Konstantin U. Chernenko and Yuri V. Andropov. Yet, even though they made some attempt to use more difficult words, the statistics show that most of the students use relatively simple words which they are most sure of. Nevertheless, some of these attempts are not quite successful. Some students even misspell some rather basic and important words, such as: expirence for experience, speciall for special, idear for ideal, strang for strange, adress for address, affraid for afraid, peice for piece, studing for studying, etc. One student mistook poem for poet and wrote the following sentence: "I imagine that I were a poem who was searching inspiration on a rainy day."

Of the 349 lexical errors, the overwhelming greatest proportion were spelling errors which numbered 156. The possible reasons for committing these spelling errors identified by the writer are as follows:

(1) Inaccurate pronunciation:

*complish (accomplish) the duty; *mickle (nickle); *conor (corner); *deligent (diligent); *accept (accept); packet (pocket); fact (face); *nomber (number); *baby (body); *strenger (stranger); jourior (junior); *rascles (rascals); *cought (caught); *though (thought) *idear (ideal); *bed (bad) *adress (address); *affraid (afraid) *peice (piece); *studing (studying)

(2) Formal Analogy:

*classmatic music (classic); *corage (courage); *un-

willness (unwillingness)

(3) Violation of spelling rules:

*wisdome (wisdom); *controler (controller); *larg (large)

(4) Inadequate learning:

*seventeet (seventeen); *chief (thief)

Morphology

Only a few morphological errors are found: sisement for wisdom; trainment for training; thought for thought.

Word-Compounding

Only a few word compounding errors are found: there-fore for therefore; money-controler for money-controller.

Capitalization

Of all the 200 students, 97 of them do not know how to capitalize the title of their composition. Most of them capitalize every word: On A Rainy Day. Some of them think that only the first word of the title should be capitalized: "On a rainy day"; "The wisest thing that I ever did". Still others just do not know which words should be capitalized and they write "On A rainy day"; "The Wisest thing that I ever did" or "On a rainy

day”, “The Wisest Thing that I ever did”.

Except for the capitalization of the title for the composition, the great majority of the students do have the habit of capitalizing the initial letter of each sentence. Only one error is found in this respect: *Sure, If I can. they occur. Only two examples of violation of this rule are found: *at the general hospital, *high school entrance examination.

Number and Countability in Nouns

Number and countability of nouns are closely related; the former may be regarded as the surface realization of the latter. As the data indicate, most of the students are quite careful in distinguishing the singular noun from its plural form. They also have a good command of the irregular plural forms of some nouns, such as: child/children, goose/geese, mouse/mice, sheep/sheep, datum/data, etc. As to the regular nouns, the singular is seldom misused for the plural and the plural for the singular. However, a few number errors are also found. The most conspicuous error is one in which the number of the noun clashes with the determiner that goes with it, as exemplified by the following sentences:

*Although this event happened eight years ago, I could still remember every details of what had happened on the fateful, rainy day.

(. . . many details (every detail) of what had happened on that. . . .)

*Rain would bring us much troubles.

(. . . much trouble (many troubles) . . .)

*I just could not understand why there were so many politicians who tried to invade other country.

(. . . so many politicians who . . . another country (other countries.)

Countability errors are the fewest. Maybe it is due to the fact that most of the nouns in the data are countable nouns, thus reducing the error percentage.

Usage of Nouns

Besides verbs, it is nouns that give to good writing its toughness and color. However, nouns that are elaborate, pretentious and difficult do not guarantee the success of a piece of writing. More often than not, plain words are more effective than difficult ones. Judging from the best writing of the students under study, we know that this statement is quite true. In these compositions, the students use common and simple nouns to convey their ideas and feelings. Since they are quite sure of the usage of these nouns, few errors are committed. For example:

Rain may be a nuisance, but again, it may become a source of joy when you look at it from another angle.

The rhythm of raindrops striking against the window pane in my bedroom is like humming "Baby, go to sleep".

Rain days are also a time for deep thinking. You can think about many things without interruption.

For some students, the misuse of nouns is commonly found in the corpus. Generally speaking, these noun errors reflect the students' inability to name things correctly or exactly, e.g.:

*I heard a terrible voice like a traffic accident.

(. . . voice like the sound of a traffic accident.)

*I thought a good manner and I immediately did.

(. . . thought of a good way and I immediately solved it.)

*I always thought to receive higher knowledge.

(. . . that I would receive. . . .)

*It is the thing I myself pride most, because I did it with consciousness.

(. . . thing on which I . . . with full awareness (forethought).)

*But a cold after the walking is the last thing I want.

(. . . after walking is)

*The driver may be the happiest one, who earns money as much as possible in this precious space of time.

(. . . one, who earns as much money as possible . . . period of time.)

Another type of error is of a collocational nature:

*One day, the weather bureau reported a typhoon would attack Taiwan. It was not serious but brought bottles and bottles of rain from the sky.

(. . . but brought buckets and buckets of rain . . .)

*Once you're in the street, you can see all sorts of funny actions people make.

(. . . funny things people do.)

*But for the children, they like to play games in the rain, a

step here and a step there, watching the water jump in the air.

(. . . watching the water splash in the air.)

Other errors concern the balance of two nouns coordinated by a conjunction. For example:

*After careful comparing and consideration, I

(. . . comparing and considering (comparison and consideration), I)

Idioms

High school students often have to memorize many idioms in their English class. However, as the data indicate, few apply the idioms they have learned to their compositions; that is, idiomatic expressions are seldom found in these compositions. As a result, the percentage of idiom errors is not very high. In some cases, a few students do use idioms to give variety and vividness to their writings, for example:

I plucked up my courage to confess to him how terribly I was.

From then on, I have come to the awareness of many noble virtues such as modesty, kindness, and thoughtfulness.

One day, when school was over, it suddenly rained cats and dogs.

I was at my wit's end and didn't know how to go home.

For all the 158 errors with idioms, the student writers either misunderstand and thus misuse the idioms or use the idioms in the right place but fail to memorize them correctly. Examples of the first type include:

*I still can't be aware of what I thought about then. . .

(. . . can't think of what . . .)

*Somedays later, the woman visited me, with a lovely girl in side of her.

(. . . girl by her side.)

*My mother was crying, dying from sorrow,

(. . . , dying of sorrow, . . .)

*I was born at a poor family.

(. . . was born in (of) a poor family.)

*My mother kindly looked down upon me.

(. . . kindly looked upon . . .)

Some examples of the second type of error are:

*It rained dogs and cats. (It rained cats and dogs,); *make up my minds (make up our minds); *make my mind; (make up my mind); *to my contents (to my heart's content); *take rest (take a rest).

Usage of Verbs

A total of 10260 verbs are used in the 200 compositions. Among them, 3065 errors are found, which constitutes a percent-

age of 29.87 of the grand total. For the statistics and types of correct and incorrect verbs, see Table 25.

Table 25

Correct vs. Incorrect Verbs

| Type | | Frequency of Occurrence | Percentage of Occurrence | Error | Error Percentage | |
|-----------------|-------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|---------|------------------|--------|
| Finite Verb | Tense | Future | 180 | 2.07% | 75 | 41.66% |
| | | Present | 2172 | 25.04% | 620 | 28.54% |
| | | Present Perfect | 276 | 3.18% | 180 | 65.21% |
| | | Past | 5796 | 66.80% | 898 | 15.49% |
| | | Past Perfect | 252 | 2.91% | 136 | 53.96% |
| | Mood | Subjunctive | 48 | 0.28% | 29 | 60.41% |
| | Voice | Passive | 216 | 2.49% | 140 | 64.81% |
| | Total | | 8676 | 100.00% | 2078 | 21.47% |
| Non-finite Verb | Infinitive | | 1260 | 79.55% | 752 | 59.68% |
| | Participial | | 324 | 20.45% | 235 | 72.53% |
| | Total | | 1584 | 100.00% | 987 | 62.31% |
| Total | | 10260 | 100.00% | 3065 | 29.87% | |

Choice of Verbs

More than any other single sentence element, verbs give a piece of writing its color and vigor. The success of a composition depends largely on the kinds of verbs the student uses. As the data indicate, some of the students under study are rather skillful in choosing the verbs in their compositions. Thus, their writings are tighter and more vigorous. For example:

Very few people welcome rain, because it is depressing.

Rain makes the road muddy, hinders business, spoils plans, makes us feel gloomy and creates dullness.

A nameless joy always arises within me when it starts to pour.

It refreshes me and provides me with a change from the usual routines of life.

For the other students, most can use common and simple verbs to convey their ideas and feelings. However, a large number of errors with the use of verbs are also found. They are often misused or inappropriately used. Most of the verb errors in this respect are of a collocational nature which has to do with some other element in the same sentence. Others involve non-English expressions and usages which make the sentences strange or absurd. For example:

*We took off our socks and had our shoes filled with water.

(... socks and our shoes were filled with ...)

*Pumped my heart whenever a lightning flashing throughout the sky.

(My heart pumped whenever lightning flashed through ...)

*The rain poured so heavily, sometimes mixed with thunder and lightning as if to perish the world.

(... lightning, as if to destroy the world.)

*Walking on, I saw the sea terribly interrupted.

(... terribly disturbed.)

*Like a single little boat, I'll steel forward into the heavy rain and storm, with no fear at all.

(... boat, I'll steer forward ...)

*Flowers rose their heads to welcome the rain.

(. . . raised)

*When I walked up on Sunday morning, I found the sky seemed so dark with dense clouds.

(. . . woke up on Sunday morning, the sky was dark)

*We had went there for a classmate reunion.

(. . . gone there for a class reunion.)

*Thus a rainy day releaves the sorrow in my heart.

(. . . relieves the sorrow)

*The sun shone like a burning ball and spreaded the golden light on all objects.

(. . . and spread its golden)

*While I, carrying no umbrella, give a smile to welcome it (rain).

(. . . umbrella, gave)

*When it rains, people walk more hurriedly than they used to.

(. . . than they usually do.)

*I would not let my brother to play with my toys.

(. . . let my brother play)

*As we stepped out the taxi, I noticed in the sky lay a beautiful rainbow.

(. . . I noticed a beautiful rainbow in the sky.)

*I am persuaded that I am surely be able to do a good job in this contest on such a rainy day.

(. . . that I will surely be)

*Morning waking me up.

(Morning woke me up.)

*Now I understand it would better to shield myself well on a rainy day.

(. . . it would be better to)

*Other classmates didn't treat me the way that they used to do.

(. . . the way they used to.)

*The swimming pools are forced to close, people who like swim cannot enjoy the exercise any more.

(. . . to close; people who like to swim)

Most of the wrong choices of verbs are due to direct translation from Chinese. Some students also use other parts of speech for the verbs. For example:

*They quiet and leave.

(. . . quieted down and left.)

*They past the examination.

(They passed)

The first error in these two examples is due to a direct translation from Chinese. The second one is due to the confusion between phonologically similar items. Other errors involve double verbs in one sentence, a transitive verb without an object and an intransitive verb with an object. For example:

*Still I neglected.

(. . . neglected to do it.)

*A lonely boy wanted to participate their game.

(. . . participate in their game.)

Some English verbs show special syntactic behavior and thus need particular attention in both teaching and learning.

Merely teaching grammatical patterns is useless, since it will cause confusion among patterns. Patterns must be demonstrated with illustrative sentences.

Usage of Tense

Limited by the topics of the writing, "The Wisest Thing I Ever Did" and "On a Rainy Day", the past tense is the most frequent verb tense in the data (66.80%). Thus, though its error number is the largest, the percentage of errors is not very high (7.45%). The more complicated tenses are not frequently used because students cleverly avoid them in order to avoid making errors (Present Perfect 3.18%, Past perfect 2.91%). Statistically speaking, tense error is the largest group in the verb-error category. Since in Chinese, the syntactic tense device is less important than adverbs in indicating time sequence, Chinese students have difficulties in this respect. For the distribution of tense errors, see Table 26.

Table 26

Tense Error

| Type | Substitution | Error | Percentage |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------|------------|
| Past Future | Future | 40 | 4.62% |
| Present | Simple Past | 140 | 16.20% |
| Past | Simple Present | 196 | 22.91% |
| | Over Marking | 52 | 6.01% |
| | Past Participle | 48 | 5.55% |
| Present Perfect | Simple Present | 72 | 8.35% |
| | Have + V. | 49 | 5.68% |
| | Have + V. -past | 62 | 7.17% |
| | Simple Past | 28 | 3.24% |
| | Past Perfect | 51 | 5.90% |
| Past Perfect | Simple Present | 40 | 4.62% |
| Tense Sequence | | 86 | 9.95% |
| Total | | 864 | 100% |

Of the tense errors found, a great majority involve misuse of one tense for another, which may or may not be accompanied by a change of aspect. Some involve merely misuse of aspects and a few involve the incorrect shift of tenses in a broader context. Presented below will be some examples for each configuration of tense errors:

Future Tense:

*I thought it will be a nice day.

(... it would be ...)

All the future tense errors found belong to the past future. Chinese students easily ignore the past tense markers in the past future tense because there is no equivalent in their mother tongue.

Past Tense:

*As far as I could remembered.

(. . . I could remember.)

*I think that is the wisest thing I ever do.

(. . . thing I ever did.)

*It was really hard for me to do at first, but I never shrink from it.

(. . . never shrank from it.)

Present Tense:

*Did you know what happened.

(Do you know)

Chinese students are confused about the usage of simple and past tenses.

Present Perfect Tense:

*I live happily from that time on.

(I lived)

*They have never make a joke on him.

(. . . have never made a)

*"Had your teachers ever told you so?" I asked.

(Have your teachers)

Since the present perfect tense in Chinese is not indicated

by grammatical rules, it is difficult for Chinese students to learn the appropriate usage of this tense. Verb form variation also constitutes a problem to the students.

Past Perfect Tense:

- *From then on, the bad young men taught me to smoke.
(... has taught me to smoke.)

Tense Sequence:

- *I was so excited that I can't help standing up from the bed.
(... that I couldn't help getting)
- *He is engrossed in studying and play no more now.
(... and now plays no more.)
- *Our grandparents forget the thing that we come to visit them.
(... forget that we will come)
- *Before I have come to Taipei, I had been told that it often rains here.
(Before I came)
- *I considered it as a day for sleep and there is so much time that I don't know how to kill.
(I considered it a day . . . there was so that . . . that I didn't)
- *Every time when it rains, I saw the girl and gain more confidence to reach my goal.
(... I see the girl)
- *Everybody sitting comfortably watched the TV programs, or was dreaming about his paradise.
(... or dreamt about his paradise.)
- *All of a sudden, an incredible miracle had happened to me.
(... miracle happened to me.)

*Why don't I cheer up and singing happily without thinking those things which make me dizzied?

(. . . up and sing (begin singing) happily)

The tense sequence errors are mostly due to carelessness in complex sentences. The monitoring model does not work after the linking conjunction and therefore the unmarked verb form appears in the latter part of the sentence.

Usage of Voice

Voice refers to the ability of transitive verbs to show whether the subject performs or receives the action named by the verbs. When the subject performs the action, the verb is in the active voice. When it receives the action, the verb is in the passive voice. The passive voice is formed by using the appropriate form of the verb be with the past participle of the main verb. Generally speaking, most of the students have good command of the usage of voice. They know the use the passive voice when the actor of the sentence is not known. For example:

The play was performed in the hall of the school.

The new house was completed that year.

On the whole, however students use more active sentences in their writings. The percentage of active sentences to passive ones is 87% to 13%. This maybe has something to with the fact that sentences in the active voice are more direct, more economi-

cal, and more forceful than those in the passive. But it may be also caused by the fact that students are more confident in writing sentences in the active voice. Since the percentage of sentences in the passive voice is not high, only a few errors are found:

*What had been happened?

(What had happened (happened)?)

*I inclined to do more wise things.

(I am inclined to)

The first example indicates that Chinese students tend to choose the passive voice according to the semantic meaning of the verb. The second example indicates that students ignore the fact that some verbs are usually in passive construction.

Usage of Mood

The mood of a verb indicates whether the speaker or writer regards the action named by the verb as a fact, a command, a wish, a request, or a condition contrary to fact. English has three moods: the indicative, used for ordinary statements and questions; the imperative, used for commands; and the subjunctive, used to express conditions contrary to fact and in clauses following certain verbs. As the data indicate, except for the subjunctive, mood causes the student writers few problems. This indicates that the subjunctive mood needs more emphasis both in teaching and learning. Correct examples are:

I wish I could go out.

No matter what difficulties we may have, we will overcome them with ease.

Erroneous sentences are:

*If I wouldn't write, we will stay there till now.

(If I hadn't written, we would have stayed)

*Often I think if we had been more careful, the tragedy wouldn't happen.

(. . . tragedy wouldn't have happened.)

Infinitives and Participles

An infinitive consists of the infinitive marker to followed by the plain form of the verb. A participle is a verb form used as an adjective to modify a noun or pronoun. They both are non-finite verbs. As the statistics indicate, the use of infinitives (79.55%) is far more frequent than that of participles (20.45%). But the error percentage is different. Students make more errors in the use of participles than infinitives. This indicates that participle teaching is less efficient. Actually, nonfinite verb usage is not as strongly emphasized in teaching as finite verb usage, which causes some confusion when students write. Erroneous examples are:

*I happened to got up very late that day.

(. . . to get up)

*The frogs were so happy, so exciting for the timely rain.

(. . . so happy, so excited about)

*I was so pleased that I rushed into the classroom, jump up and down.

(. . . classroom, jumping up and down.)

*So I decided to rang her family up.

(. . . to ring her)

*He encouraged himself work hard.

(. . . himself to work hard.)

*He seemed to heartsick.

(. . . to be heartsick.)

*That's a suffocated afternoon.

(. . . a suffocating afternoon.)

Dangling Modifiers

A modifier is a “dangling modifier” when there is no word in the sentence for it to modify. Two errors have been found belonging to this area:

(1) *Looking into the room carefully, there was her father lying on the bed.

(2) *After explaining my purpose to the quard, he let me in.

Dangling modifiers can be corrected in either of two ways: (i) by supplying the noun or pronoun which the phrase logically describes, (ii) or by changing the dangling construction to a complete clause. Therefore, (1) can be corrected either as Looking into the room carefully, I saw her father lying on the bed, or As I looked into the room carefully, there was her father lying on

the bed. And (2) can be corrected either as After explaining my purpose to the guard, I was allowed to get in, or After I had explained my purpose to the guard, he let me in.

Adjectives and Adverbs

Adjectives and adverbs are subsumed under the same heading because they both are modifiers. Besides, many adjectives and adverbs are derived from the same item, and misuse of one may imply misuse of the other. From the analysis of the data, it is found that most of the students can use common and simple adjectives and adverbs to express their feelings. For example:

Gradually, I became more arrogant and stingy.

They are quite different opinions about a rainy day. Some think it distressful, a boring natural phenomenon, but some consider it a romantic, wonderful gift from God.

No matter what you do, do your best to enjoy a lovely, beautiful rainy day.

I am an avid reader. However, reading textbooks during a rainy day is unimaginable to me.

It is as if a chemical change has occurred within me as I lie on my bed, that I feel so contented and wish the moment could last precisely as it is forever.

I'd feel like going out to the garden, for in the rain the trees always look good and the flowers beautiful.

As to the errors with adjectives and adverbs, they often result from the confusion of adjectives with adverbs, for example:
*the help of the hardly man; *I have lived happier than ever.

They may also involve the wrong modifier, for example:

- *After much careful comparing and consideration,
(. . . careful comparision and consideration,)
- *He looked as if he very like me.
(. . . as if he very much liked me.)

Some fail to spell the correct forms of the adjectives:

- *a misfortune man
(. . . unfortunate man)
- *I was so disirous to own a camera.
(. . . so desirous of owning a camera.)

The confusion of the adjective with the adverb may be because both of them share the same general function and because the majority of adverbs and adjectives are similar in form and meaning. "Very" and "much" have very distinct functions: "Very" usually modifies the root forms of present participle used as adjective; "much", comparative, superative, and past participle. But there are exceptions. "Very" can modify "tired", which is a past participle used as an adjective. "Much" can modify "afraid". Because of this kind of complexity, students very often are confused about how to use these two words. The other errors such as a wrong superlative or coining a non-existent adjective form are mainly due to inadequate learning, e.g. *the stupident person.

Nevertheless, the great majority of errors with adjectives and adverbs are of a collocational nature, that is, having to do

with the head noun or verb they modify:

*A rainy day, especially on a hard one, always reminds me of the endless love that Mother gives me.

(. . . especially on long one always)

*The house was a two-stories high bungalow with a history of ten years.

(. . . was a two story building with)

*The weather didn't make itself a kill joy.

(. . . itself a killjoy.)

*It is not quite convenience for me to go to school on a rainy day.

(It is not quite convenient for)

*As the cars pass by a puddle of water, you may get wet total

(. . . you may get wet totally.)

Prepositions

“Preposition” is here taken in the commonly accepted sense to include such words as at, in, on, with, to, from, against, etc. Chinese students are always required to learn preposition usage by heart. As the data indicate, most of the students in our study seem to have good memory and they do quite well in this respect. They know with which verb different preposition should go. For Example:

I am usually lost in deep thought on a rainy day.

It is such marvelous experience reading Alfred Hitchcock with thunder and lightning just outside your bedroom.

The rain washes off the dirt on the road as well as the dust in the air.

I decide to exert myself to help all others when they are in need.

However, preposition usage still causes confusion. Errors with prepositions found in the subjects are of a collocational nature. Some students still fail to recognize that certain words often occur with certain prepositions. Another error involves the appearance of a preposition before a wrong part of speech, such as adverbs:

- (1) *My mother looked forward of my studying hard.
(... looked forward to ...)
- (2) *We ran to the beautiful pond in our campus and we enjoyed ourselves there.
(... pond on our campus ...)
- (3) *Enjoy yourselves at both rainy days and sunny days.
(... on both rainy ...)
- (4) *I thought it was really a good day for out shopping.
(... a good day for shopping.)
- (5) *There are lots to enjoy whey staying at home on a rainy day.
(There are lots of things to ...)
- (6) *I called to the police.
(I called the police.)
- (7) *Facing with the following year, I am quite at loss what to do.
(Faced with ...)
- (8) *I often regret for what I did.
(I often regret what I did.)

In the last example, the noun usage and verb usage for "regret" are different and the student applies the noun usage to the verb, thus making an error. The seventh example indicates that that students are confused with the active and passive usage of the verb "face"; it is either "Facing the following year" or "Faced with the following year."

Another kind of error in preposition usage is also worth special attention:

- (9) My victory over the examination.
- (10) I am not aware of how to value myself.

In the ninth and tenth examples, it is not the case that the preposition does not match the previous expressions, but the case that it does not fit the following expressions. Therefore, in studying prepositional phrases, students should pay attention to the items following the preposition.

Auxiliaries

Owing to the fact that in Chinese we have no auxiliary verbs that function like those in English, the students often fail to acquire the particular syntactic functions of the auxiliary: they can carry tense aspects; they do not simultaneously occur with be; they can occur with a negative morpheme to form negatives; they can undergo S-V Inversion, etc.

- *The window did be broken.
(... was (had been) broken.)
- *A rainy day will makes people feel better.
(... will make)

Subject-Verb Concord

Concord is the agreement in form between two or more constituents of the same sentence with respect to certain features of the language—number, gender, person, case, etc. In English, number concord between subject and verb appears to be the most common and important. As the statistics show, most of the students are rather capable in matching the correct verb forms with their subjects. However, some quite naive errors of subject-verb concord are found. Many of them are committed through carelessness. For example:

- *The frightened feelings was filled with my heart.
(Frightening feelings filled my heart.)
- *Hopes comes to me again.
(Hopes come)
- *All the dust have been washed off.
(... dust has)
- *The scene, which I thinks of as the most movable one.
(... , which I think)
- *I shall never forgot.
(... never forget.)
- *It were the world and her life that she was cherishing.

(It was the world)

*Everything were in a mess downstairs.

(Everything was)

*The sky soon darkens, and the rain come heavily, with lightning flashing, and the thunder roaring.

(. . . , and the rain comes)

Subject-Verb Inversion

This kind of error seldom occurs, which indicates the success of teaching and the success of the students' monitors which act as watchdogs over the whole production process. Only one example is found:

*Not until midnight I went to bed.

(. . . midnight did I go to bed.)

Conjunction

On the whole, the students have a quite good command of conjunction usage. Most of the conjunction errors found can be divided into two groups: coordination and subordination. In the coordination group, a typical example is as follows:

*It doesn't need money to buy instrument, space, companion.

(It does take money to buy an instrument, space, and a companion.)

When more than two elements are to be conjoined, the coordinator should be put between the last two elements.

In the subordination group, some subordinators are in complementary distribution to one/another, e.g. *because* and *so*, *though* and *but*. A sample error involved such subordinators is:

*My selection is right because of in the scientific age, the speed of development to the world is high we must fill our knowledge.

(. . . because in the scientific age, . . . in the world is high so we must increase . . .)

Other errors involve double conjunctions, improper conjunctions, and the omission of the conjunctions:

*This tremendous change is all because that I met a special girl on a rainy day.

(. . . because I met . . .)

*I wonder that what made her so generous.

(I wonder what made . . .)

*Of course, raining also brings some troubles, like we have to carry umbrellas with us when going out and the roads may become slippery so that drivers must be more careful.

(. . . troubles; for example, we have . . .)

*The streets are not so crowded, that it is quiet and peaceful in the city.

(. . . are not crowded, so it is quiet . . .)

*I wondered the wind was so violent.

(I wondered why the wind . . .)

Run-on Sentences

Generally speaking, most of the students have a rather clear idea of the concept of a “sentence” in English. They know how to join two simple sentences with different conjunctions. However, there are some occasions where they let more than one sentence run together as one without joining them by proper conjunctions. This may be results from interference from Chinese. In Chinese, we do not have clear punctuation or capitalization to mark the sentence boundary. Run-on sentences are also caused by students’ intentions to express a too complex idea or too many related ideas in a single sentence. Examples of this kind of error are:

*It was a fine weekend, and the sun rose high above sky, the air filled with cheer, for I had done my examination.

(. . . rose high in the sky. The air. . . cheer, for I had finished examination.)

*All we wishes is to bring you up, let you get a good education.

(All we wish is . . . up and let you . . .)

*I was no doubt stood at the bottom of the class, I was a nuisance of teachers and a heartbreaker of my parents.

(There was no doubt that I stood . . . class. I was a nuisance to my teacher and . . . for my parents.)

*We do many routines in our everyday life, I, a senior high school student, am not aware of how to value myself at all, only to fool around all day long.

(. . . everyday life. I, a senior to value myself at all, only to fool . . .)

*It is perseverance that enables us to conquer insurmount-

able obstacles makes our lives meaningful and worthwhile.

(It is perseverance that . . . obstacles and makes our lives)

Articles

The relative high occurrence of article errors points to the great difficulty in this area of language use, especially for the non-native learner. Being too many rules about article usage, high school students are confused when they write. And since there is nothing whatever in Chinese corresponding to the definite article the and the distinction between a and an, Chinese students have great difficulties here. Therefore, the article error is the third high ranking error in the present study, next only to tense errors and spelling errors. In terms of form, the errors with articles involve the confusion of a and an, omission of the indefinite article, omission of the definite article, misuse of the indefinite for the definite or vice versa, misuse of the articles for some other determiners, etc. For the distribution of article errors, see Table 27.

Table 27 Distribution of Article Errors

| Type | Error | Percentage |
|---|-------|------------|
| Omission of Definite Article | 70 | 47.65% |
| Omission of Indefinite Article | 67 | 44.96% |
| Confusion between Indefinite Articles
A and An | 12 | 7.39% |
| Total | 149 | 100.00% |

The examples found include the following:

- *English is an universal language.
(... a universal language.)
- *In the door, a old man stood.
(... , an old man stood.)
- *I am not so intelligent to have done so-called the wisest thing.
(... the so-called wisest thing.)
- *high above sky
(... above the sky)
- *until the midnight
(until midnight)
- *in a evening
(in an evening)
- *It is quite interesting to find the world becomes a umbrella world.
(... to find that ... an umbrella world.)
- *I expected there to be healthy and naughty child.
(... to be a healthy ...)
- *Proper amount of rain can save the crops in drought.
(A proper amount ... crops after a drought.)
- *The boy was rescued by surgeons of the hospital.
(... by the surgeons at the hospital.)
- *It was a rainy day, annoying type of day that I disliked most.
(It was ... an annoying type of day that I dislike the most.)

The article system is among the latest acquired parts of the linguistic system that a native English speaking child acquires

in its mother tongue. It is suggested by some scholars that the English article system is so complicated that even for first-language learners it is for the most part learned rather than acquired. For non-native speakers of English, techniques for strengthening the monitor regarding the use of articles are of urgent need.

Misplacement

Only a few errors are identified in this area, which constitutes a minor percentage, compared to those of other errors.

*I'll never forget the wisest thing I have done ever.
(. . . thing I have ever done.)

Semantic Errors

The semantic errors found in the 200 papers are (1) redundancy and (2) heavily Chinese-laden expressions. They constituted 8.45% of the total errors. This distribution of the semantic errors is as below:

Table 28

| Type | Error | | Total | |
|--------------------------|---------|----|-------|-----|
| Chinese-laden Expression | Simple | 45 | 130 | 158 |
| | Complex | 85 | | |
| Redundancy | Simple | 0 | 28 | |
| | Complex | 28 | | |

Non-native, Pidginized or Chinese-laden Expressions

These kinds of errors constitute the overwhelming majority of the semantic errors. They clearly show the imperfect stages of the internalizing processes from the students' native language to the target language.

High school students, subject to the test form, pay a lot of attention to the grammar of English while extensive or intensive listening, reading, speaking, and writing are neglected. The consequence of this is that students tend to translate notions planned in Chinese into English word for word, which results in the heavily Chinese-laden expressions. The errors of this kind are among the most difficult ones to be overcome. The examples are many:

*I did not hear her words.

(... did not listen to ...)

(我沒聽她的話)

(wo mei t'ing ta de hwa)

*There are many difficulties and dangers wait us.

(... difficulties and dangers that wait for us.)

(有許多困難及危險等着我們。)

(yo hsyu t'wo kwen nan chih wu hsyen ten cho wo men.)

*I was no doubt stood at the bottom of the class.

(There was no doubt that I stood at ...)

(我是毫無疑問地佔在班上尾巴。)

(wo shih hao su i wen de cheng tsai pan shan wei pa.)

*When I face graduate ...

(When I am going to graduate ...)

(當我面臨畢業...)

(tang wo myen lin pi yei ...)

*I came to grow up year after year.

(I grew up)

(年復一年我漸漸長大。)

(nyen hu i nyeh wo cheng cheng chang ta.)

*They worked . . . to make us a comfortable life.

(. . . to give us a comfortable life.)

(使我們有適舒的生活)

(shih wo men yo shu shih de shen hwou.)

*. . . to care her health

(. . . to care (take care of) her health)

(照顧她的健康...)

(. . . tsao ku ta de chyen kan)

Some are just non-native or pidginized forms, which supports our assumption that not all errors are from the interference of L1. Some errors reflect the interlanguage of L2 learners, as do the following examples:

*I think I can't because of my becoming a good student only at the expense of my health.

*Doing a wise thing is full of vitality and enthusiasm which can open a new way to a new world and lead us to the advanced life.

*So seldom did I utilize my thought to do wise thing.

*She was awake and smile as an apple.

Redundancy

There is not much redundancy in the compositions of the

students under study. The students are quite skillful in using the pro-forms in English, such as the auxiliaries, the helping verbs, so, such, etc. This makes their writings tighter and more forceful. For example:

Other classmates didn't treat me the way that they used to.
In the rain the trees always look good and the flowers beautiful.

Some instances of redundancy are also found:

*I didn't listen to her and obey her.
(. . . listen to and obey her.)

The cause of this kind of error is that students are not quite sure of the exact meaning of a word, and therefore repeat themselves from time to time.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATION

Conclusion

As mentioned previously, Performance Analysis is not only a useful means of understanding the learner's system, but also one of the objective, effective means of assessing the learner's knowledge of the language. Frequency rates of correct usage and errors do reflect to a significant extent the proficiency of the learner. Generally speaking, within the framework of grammatical errors, the hierarchy of difficulty appears as follows, in descending order: (1) verbs, (2) nouns, (3) articles, (4) adjectives and adverbs, (5) prepositions, (6) conjunctions. Although there is still instability in these areas, yet the writings of the subjects indicate that they have a rather good command of the basic structures of English. Most of the students write in a plain style, using relatively simple structures and vocabulary which they are most sure of. Some attempt to write in a more sophisticated style, using more complicated structures and more difficult words, and, as a result, more errors tend to be committed. However, there are great differences among students from different schools. So far as the better students are concerned, their writing abilities are quite excellent. The writings of the other students need improvement in many respects.

There is one weakness in writing which is common to most of the students, that is, the content of their compositions is

rather poor. Genuinely original ideas are seldom found. On the contrary, copied ideas, cliches and even nonsense are frequent. Most of the students describe a special event on a rainy day. Generally speaking, the events they describe are not vivid and impressive enough. It also never occurs to them that the topic "On a Rainy Day" can metaphorically mean "under bad or disadvantageous circumstances". The reasons for such poverty in the content of the students' compositions may be two: they either are not endowed with the kind of rich ideas that are required for good writing, or they may not be able to express in the second language the better ideas they have in mind.

Implications

Corder (1967) states the usefulness of error analysis for three different people involved with language learning: the researcher or linguist, the language teacher, and the learner himself. These three groups also can value the Performance Analysis. Listed below are some implications for teaching and learning based on the results obtained from the analysis of students' compositions in this study.

(1) The need to pinpoint students' writing problems: A teacher must have a clear understanding of the writing ability of his students. He should know what their strong points are and what constitutes their difficulties in writing. Only after he has made such a preassessment, can he adopt the best teaching methods to suit his students' needs. Besides, the teacher should make use of the hierarchy of difficulty. Those categories ranking higher

in the hierarchy should receive more emphasis in the teaching process.

(2) The need for remedial programs: From the previous analyses, it is found that even competent students from famous senior high schools commit many basic errors in writing, not to mention the remaining great majority of students. Thus, remedial programs of some kind are necessary.

(3) Implications for teaching methodology: As we said in the beginning of this paper: writing may be considered the most difficult of the language skills; it takes great pains and efforts to develop a good writing ability. It's needless to say that practice is necessary. But practice alone cannot insure perfection. Traditionally, most teachers think that the more their students write, the better they write. Some teachers even ask their students to recite many of the so called "model" articles with a view to imitating those good writings. Now it should be realized that significant progress in writing results only when the writing task of the students is under careful, organized direction. Giving only the opportunity for students to write, such as by assigning a topic, gathering the student papers, correcting some mistakes in them and handing them back to the students, will usually not result in marked progress.

According to the result of the present study, some English grammatical features causing a great number of errors should receive particular attention in the class lecture, such as complex tense usage, irregular verb conjugation, article usage and pronoun usage.

The traditional translation method in explaining the vocabulary should be improved because many errors are caused

by students who take the simple Chinese translation as the one and only meaning of the word and use the word regardless of other restrictions, like collocations. Teachers should provide sentences as examples to illustrate the usage of a certain vocabulary, and ask students to do sentence formation exercises to practice. In this way, students can be trained to have a more native-like command of English.

It is not a very bad method to ask students to memorize vocabulary and idioms. But the effect of mechanical rote learning may cause errors, as shown in the sentence: She was a very kind of Woman. Therefore, even in the concept meaningful learning should not be forgotten.

The large amount of transfer errors found in the data indicates that a contrastive approach to language teaching is necessary in class lectures, especially in explaining errors. When references to previous language experience are used, students will be much more impressed with the similarities and differences between English and Chinese, and thus they will not make errors which are caused by confusion about the grammatical structures of the mother tongue and the target language.

(4) The need to broaden the horizon of the students: As observed in this study, many senior high school students have a quite good command of the basic structures of English. However, the content of their writing is often not very significant and impressive. Most of the students in senior high school have had only limited experiences in life. What they do daily is study and sit for examinations. The teacher should help the students to broaden their horizons. In addition to selecting a suitable textbook, the teacher should introduce to the students other good

pieces of writing and arouse their concern with and interest in their surroundings. This can vastly enrich their ideas and make their writing more effective and impressive.

Applications

From the information reported in types of errors the Chinese student of English is likely to make. It may prove helpful to suggest reasons for these errors and ways of avoiding them when he writes a piece of work.

Firstly, and most seriously, there is the type of error which leads to misunderstanding or, even worse, a total breakdown in communication. The causes of such misunderstanding and breakdowns are numerous.

Perhaps the most frequent cause of such a breakdown in meaning is the use of translation. Unfortunately, translation is a difficult art which cannot be performed by a word-to-word matching process. Students, however, often work out a sentence in Chinese and then try to translate it this way. The result is that very often the reader simply cannot understand what the student has written (Huang: 1978). The individual words, or odd phrases, may make sense but the sentence as a whole is nonsense. The student should, therefore, always try to employ sentence patterns that he knows are correct English. Usually these patterns will be the simple ones he learned in the earlier stages of his first English courses. As he extends his knowledge of the grammar through formal training, through wide reading, and through his contact with native English speakers, he will be able

to use a larger number of such sentence patterns. Eventually, he should cut off translation altogether. He should, in fact, try to think in English.

But it is not only grammar which suffers when translation is employed. Vocabulary may suffer, too. The use of translation dictionaries, unless they are very good and used with extreme care, may make errors more probable. Chinese students usually have the misconception that every word in English has just one meaning. This misconception is a direct result of the way in which Chinese students have been taught English. For example, long vocabulary lists are still an important feature in the English learning programs. On one side of the page is the word in English; on the other side a Chinese equivalent. Thus, practically all the students think that every word in English has an exact translation equivalent in Chinese. This is a gross distortion of the truth. Sometimes a word in Chinese may not have an equivalent in English at all; you may have to employ a phrase to translate it. The difficulty that many students have with "listen to" or "look at" is an example of this. Chinese students also have the misconception about English that a word can be used correctly as soon as its meaning is known. This is untrue. English has a larger vocabulary than any other language. It is, therefore, particularly rich in synonyms. English speakers use Anglo-Saxon words in their everyday spoken language, but often prefer a Latin synonym in their formal written language. Some words, though they mean the same, can only be used when certain other words are present. For example, the verbs *do* and *make* cover roughly the same area of meaning in English. You cannot, however, write "I will make my homework," you must write "I will

do my homework." On the other hand, you must write "I will make a cup of coffee," not "I will do a cup of coffee."

The best way for the Chinese student to increase his vocabulary is: firstly, to observe the unknown word in its context; in other words, the neighboring words and the grammatical construction should be noted. A good dictionary should be referred to. Secondly, the student should use the new word in an appropriate context, imitating the examples he has noted. Finally, he will need to practice using the word several times before he is confident that he can use it correctly; in other words, repetition is necessary if the new word is to enter the student's active vocabulary.

Another very important cause of a breakdown in communication in written work is the student's tendency to confuse grammatical patterns which are similar in form but different in meaning. For example "used to" and "to be used to". He may write "Men are used to believing in their superiority over women" Instead of "Men used to believe in their superiority over women." These two sentence patterns look similar but have completely different meanings.

A third cause is that the student may choose to write sentences which are too long and too complex instead of those simpler ones which he can handle more easily. Many students and teachers seem to think that simplicity is suspect. It is, on the contrary, a quality which is much admired in English. Most readers of English tend to believe that a difficult subject can only be written up simply if the writer understands it very well. A student should, therefore, be taught how to organize all his points very carefully before he starts to write. He should do as

much of his thinking as possible before he writes. Writing this way, he can concentrate on the construction of his sentences. A rough but useful rule that students should bear in mind is—"Never write a sentence more than 20 words in length." The longer the sentence, of course, the greater is the chance of the writer making mistakes and failing to communicate his intended meaning. In particular, the student should try to avoid a sentence with too many subordinate clauses.

Conversely—and a fourth cause of a breakdown in communication—the student may sometimes employ sentences which are too short and which are incomplete. For example, his sentences may lack a subject or a verb. The student, knowing the subject matter well himself, may think that he has conveyed his meaning quite clearly. The reader, however, remains confused.

The second main type of error is the error which—although it may only rarely lead to a breakdown in meaning—often irritates and sometimes momentarily may mislead the reader. The wrong selection of a verb tense frequently falls into this category. The student who writes "Before the second world war Einstein has discovered his famous formula $E=MC^2$ ", for example, makes a mistake which doesn't interfere with the meaning. Often the student makes grammatical mistakes which fall into this second category and which he can correct himself if he checks his work sufficiently carefully. Then there are errors in concord: the subject and verb don't agree; errors in word order occur, such as the adverb has been placed in the wrong position; errors in article usage occur, particularly the omission of an article. All these frequently occur in the work of the learner of English when he writes a paragraph. When he writes, therefore, he should prepare

a rough draft. The draft should be checked for the above points. (See Appendix III) If a student finds that he makes one type of mistake more often than others, then he should double check for that particular error. All this is, of course, time-consuming. There is, however, no substitute for it.

CHAPTER V

A DESIGN FOR DEVELOPING WRITING SKILLS

I. Introduction

Chinese high school students usually find that writing is the most difficult English skill they have to master. Indeed, the majority of native speakers of English have to make an effort to write accurately and efficiently even on those subjects which they know very well. The non-native speaker, then, is trying to do something that the average native speaker often finds difficult himself.

Why are mistakes such a common feature of the language teacher's and the language learner's lives? Are mistakes made because of lack of attention, or is there more to it than that? Pages covered with red ink are disheartening to the student who has put hours of effort into the exercise and they also mean extra work for the teacher. Can the teacher help students make fewer mistakes? Some of these questions have been dealt with in this study, although no claims are made to having found the answer to all of them.

The following teaching plan is designed to make the role of error in writing clear and provide suggestions for how to deal with mistakes. There may be no simple way of preventing all mistakes, but that does not matter. What is more important is to realize that making mistakes can be a necessary and useful part of the learning process. It is hoped that the general teaching

plan will enable students to develop those skills which they need in order to write English which is clear and fluent in style and which is suited to the purpose and content of a particular piece of writing.

II. General Teaching Plan

1. Introducing the topic

The teacher reads out the title and discusses it with the students. It is often possible for the teacher to give a brief oral example of what can be said about the topic based on the student's experiences. It is often a good idea to use local pictures, maps, booklets, etc. to introduce the topic further. For example, for writing a paragraph describing yourself, you could say what you look like, what you do, where you live, what you like or dislike to do, and the like.

2. Oral practice

This practice is to be done in pairs or in groups. Each student should ask and answer each question.

(1) How old are you?

I am _____ years old.

(2) Approximately, what is your height?

I am very tall (quite tall / not very tall / of medium height).

(3) What is the color of your hair?

My hair is black (dark / brown / grey).

(4) What kinds of clothes do you wear?

| | | | |
|---|--|------|---|
| I | always
usually
often
frequently
sometimes
never
seldom | wear | new clothes.
old clothes.
unusual clothes.
expensive clothes.
silk dresses.
fashionable clothes.
my school uniform.
(etc.) |
|---|--|------|---|

(5) Do your clothes please your father (mother / teacher)?

My father (mother / teacher) likes my clothes.

or

My clothes make my father (mother / teacher) angry.

(6) Where do you study?

I am a student in _____. (Say the name of the school.)

(7) What do you like doing in your spare time?

| | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| I | like
dislike

enjoy
hate | going to the movies.
playing football, basketball, netball, tennis,
etc.
listening to pop records.
sitting in the living room.
reading in the library.
talking with friends.
(etc.) |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|

(8) Where do you live?

I live in _____. (Say the name of the town or district.)

(9) Do you live along (with your family / with friends)?

I live _____ . / I share a room with _____ .

3. Vocabulary study

Some help may be needed with the different names for the clothes worn by men and women.

| | |
|-------------|--|
| A man wears | a shirt.
a tie.
a pull over.
a suit.
a sweater.
trousers.
jeans.
slacks
(etc.) |
|-------------|--|

| | |
|---------------|---|
| A woman wears | a blouse.
a jumper.
a dress.
a skirt.
a mini-skirt.
a tunic.
a maxi-skirt.
trousers.
jeans.
a trouser suit.
tights.
(etc.) |
|---------------|---|

Boys and girls both wear school uniforms. (tee shirts / jackets)
 Men and women both wear shoes (sandals / boots / sneakers).

4. Students writing

The teacher must make sure the students understand the type of writing they are going to produce and its purpose. He

must provide useful vocabulary where necessary. The students should write their first rough draft in their notebooks. This can be done in the classroom or at home. Here is a sample paragraph written by a local high school student:

I am fifteen years old, not very tall and I have short black hair. I wear very usual clothes and my father often gets angry with me. He often wants me to wear a suit and a tie. I am a student at the Normal University High School and I work hard before the exams. In my spare time I like sitting in the student center and chatting with my friends. During term I share a small room with two friends. I have a lot of colorful posters on the walls of my bedroom.

5. Correction

The teacher should ask the student to exchange his written work with another student. To overcome shyness, students are allowed to exchange their work with their friends. The teacher asks each student to read his classmate's paragraph carefully and check it for spelling, the correct form of verbs, and the correct form of pronouns. When the student's rough work has been thoroughly checked and corrected, let him write the corrected version of his writing in the proper page of his workbook. Before he gives it to the teacher, the teacher asks the student to look through his paragraph to see if he has used verbs like enjoy, hate and like.

6. Revision

The teacher chooses one of the paragraphs written by the students and looks through the paragraph to see if the verbs like hate, like, dislike have been used. Let the students study the following sentence from the paragraph.

In my spare time I like sitting in the student center and chatting with my friends.

Practice the following sentences orally.

- (1) I like (go) to the movies.
- (2) I dislike (watch) football matches.
- (3) I hate (do) nothing.
- (4) I dislike (wait) for a bus in the rain.
- (5) I enjoy (walk) in the rain.
- (6) I hate (take) an exam.
- (7) I enjoy (visit) friends.
- (8) I like (wear) new clothes.
- (9) I dislike (eat) ice-cream.

7. Reading and correcting without frustrating

Reading and correcting composition work is often very unsatisfactory for everyone concerned. The teacher feels that he spends hours correcting mistakes and that his students take little notice of his corrections. Students feel that a teacher is only concerned with finding mistakes and he does not appreciate the teacher's hard work. When their work is returned covered with red ink, the students feel a sense of failure which does

not encourage them to learn from mistakes and to learn from writing. The following will outline some suggestions for avoiding this unhappy situation:

- (1) Use a list of symbols for common errors (See Appendices I & II) that will give sufficient clues to enable self-correction to be made and lessen the burden of correction.
- (2) Mark the errors with symbols indicating types of errors. Do not correct the errors for the students.
- (3) Deal with errors through marginal comments or footnotes.
- (4) Ask the students to keep a record of their own errors (See Appendix III).
- (5) Ask the students to recopy their written work after they have corrected the errors.
- (6) Don't record the grade or credit it for the composition until the student has corrected the corrections.
- (7) No failing grades should be given, except for the student who refuses to hand in the corrected version of his composition.
- (8) Write a brief comment at the end of each composition. This will draw attention to what the teacher has found in the composition rather than what he has found wrong. Examples like "Good job", "Nice work", "Well written", "Excellent, much better than last week", "You have used the new structure well", "I enjoyed reading the story", "An interesting composition—well done", "I like everyday clothing, too. It's so much more comfortable than dressing up", might help.
- (9) Use frequent errors as an illustration for a class explanation. If necessary, explain orally to individual students.

8. Grading

| | | | |
|-----------------------|--|--|---|
| Content
(30%) | quality and development of idea | excellent
very good
good
fair
poor | 30-27
26-22
21-17
16-13
13-10 |
| Organization
(30%) | relevance, movement, style, flavor and individuality | excellent
very good
good
fair
poor | 30-27
26-22
21-17
16-13
13-10 |
| Vocabulary
(20%) | wording and phrasing | excellent
very good
good
fair
poor | 20-18
17-14
13-10
9-7
6-4 |
| Grammar
(15%) | grammar and sentence structure | excellent
very good
good
fair
poor | 15-14
13-12
11-10
9-7
6-4 |
| Mechanics
(5%) | punctuation, capitalization, spelling, handwriting, and neatness | excellent
very good
good
fair
poor | 5
4
3
2
1 |

III. Reading and Correcting Written Work with an Example

Topic: My Journey

My family lives at Hsin-ying. When I was thirteen years old, I travelled from Hsin-ying to Tainan in order to continue my education. I left Hsin-ying on the (1st) of September. It was a fine sp

day. As soon as we left Hsin-ying our car[^] began prep
to run at a very fast speed. It took thirty minite. sp/pl
And then we reached Tainan. The car made me[^]
sick. We had our (lanch) at a restaurant, but I ww/sp
couldn't eat anything except at little bread.
After I got some medicine, I felt myself very ww
well. ww

After lunch we went to our uncle's home.
As soon as we got out of the car, I saw my uncle
wait for me in front of his house. He took me[^]his wf/prep
house. After I had stayed[^]my uncle's house for prep
a few days, I went to school.

(NB: After the student has okayed the corrections, the teacher may credit the composition and write a brief comment.)

Score: Good Reader Comment: An interesting composition. I enjoy this story.







IV. Conclusion

- (1) Writing needs to be much more explicit than speech because communication is dependent on the words alone.
- (2) Students should be helped to avoid making errors in writing by being given a great deal of guidance in the early stages and not being allowed to do exercises they have not been sufficiently prepared for.
- (3) Peer-checking can save the teacher's time and develop a new

channel of learning for the students.

- (4) Where work is corrected by the teacher, a code which indicates to the students the type of error they have made will involve them in a combined use of all the language skills.
- (5) Writing practices should be integrated into speaking, listening, and reading exercises.
- (6) Students will gain confidence in their handling of written English if they are given practice in using English in realistic situations that draw on a more conscious assessment of what they have produced.

APPENDIX I A LIST OF SYMBOLS FOR CORRECTION

| ERROR | SYMBOL | MEANING | EXAMPLE |
|--|---|---|---|
| 1. SENTENCE SHOULD HAVE BEEN INDENTED TO BEGIN A NEW PARAGRAPH. |  | A new paragraph starts here. | ¶ This sentence should have started a new paragraph, but it didn't. So, I put a paragraph symbol there. |
| 2. SENTENCE SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN INDENTED BECAUSE IT DOES NOT BEGIN A NEW PARAGRAPH. |  | This sentence should not start a new paragraph. | The next sentence should not have started a new paragraph. So, I inserted a "run-together" symbol. |
| 3. WORDS (OR A SENTENCE) ARE OUT OF ORDER. |  | Transfer the words to the place indicated by the arrow. | He ^{a new bike} won. |
| 4. LETTERS OR WORDS NEXT TO ONE ANOTHER ARE IN A REVERSE ORDER. |  | Rearrange the letters or words. | We can never be sure. |
| 5. WORDS, LETTERS, OR PUNCTUATION MARKS NEED TO BE TAKEN OUT. |  | Take out. | This, ^r this ^l is my motto. |
| 6. SOMETHING NEEDS TO BE ADDED. |  | Insert. | This ^{is} my motto. |

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| ERROR | SYMBOL | MEANING | EXAMPLE |
|--|---------------|---|---|
| 7. A LOWER-CASE LETTER SHOULD BE A CAPITAL. | ≡ | Capitalize. | Today is <u>mike</u> 's birthday. |
| 8. A CAPITAL LETTER SHOULD BE A LOWER-CASE LETTER. | / | Make a capital letter a lower-case (small) letter. | Today As Mike's birthday. |
| 9. AN ABBREVIATION OR A FIGURE SHOULD BE SPELLED OUT. | ○ | Spell out. | The margin is (2) (in.) |
| 10. TOO MUCH SPACE IS ALLOWED BETWEEN LETTERS OR WORDS. | () | Close up the space. | That is the problem over all. |
| 11. NOT ENOUGH SPACE IS ALLOWED BETWEEN LETTERS OR WORDS. | #
or
┌└ | Add space. | That [*] is the problem these days.
That [*] is <u>the</u> problem these days. |
| 12. A LETTER OR A WORD SHOULD BE IN ITALIC TYPE OR UNDERLINED. | — | Use italic type. | Mary McCarthy wrote The Groves of Academe. |
| 13. A LETTER OR A WORD SHOULD BE IN BOLDFACE TYPE. | ~~~~~ | Use boldface | Remember this principle! |
| 14. SOMETHING WAS DELETED BY MISTAKE. | △ | matter that was previously canceled should be retained. | △ △ △
You should never
△ △
say this. |

| ERROR | SYMBOL | MEANING | EXAMPLE |
|---|--------|------------------------------|---|
| 15. MATTER
WAS NOT
INDENTED AS
IT SHOULD
HAVE BEEN. |] [| matter is to
be indented. | This] matter is [to
be indented. |

APPENDIX II A LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS FOR CORRECTION

| | |
|------|------------------------|
| SVA | Subject-verb agreement |
| NA | Number Agreement |
| Sp | Spelling |
| Art | Article |
| P | Punctuation |
| Prep | Preposition |
| Pro | Pronoun |
| Fg | Fragment |
| CS | Comma splice |
| ROS | Run-on sentence |
| WF | Wrong Form |
| WM | Word Missing |
| WW | Wrong Word |
| WE | Wrong Expression |
| T | Tense |
| VF | Verb Form |
| Uc | Unclear |
| Re | Repetition |
| Un | Unnecessary |
| NP | New Paragraph |
| PS | Parallel Structure |
| LU | Lack of Unity |
| Inc | Incomplete |

APPENDIX III AN ERROR CHECK LIST

N.B.: After a student receives his graded compositions, he should chart his errors in order to see the progress he makes. Ask the student to fill in the number of mistakes of each type that he has made.

| Kind of Error | Composition Number | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| Verb Tense (T) | | | | | | | | |
| Spelling (Sp) | | | | | | | | |
| Number Agreement (NA) | | | | | | | | |
| Subject-Verb Agreement (SVA) | | | | | | | | |
| Word Missing (WM) | | | | | | | | |
| Article (Art) | | | | | | | | |
| Wrong Word (WW) | | | | | | | | |
| Wrong Expression (WE) | | | | | | | | |
| Wrong Form (WF) | | | | | | | | |
| Punctuation (P) | | | | | | | | |
| Preposition (Prep) | | | | | | | | |
| Pronoun (Pro) | | | | | | | | |
| Word Order (WO) | | | | | | | | |
| Unnecessary (Un) | | | | | | | | |
| Verb Form (VF) | | | | | | | | |
| Unclear (Uc) | | | | | | | | |
| New Paragraph (NP) | | | | | | | | |
| Repetition (Re) | | | | | | | | |
| Incomplete (Inc) | | | | | | | | |
| Parallel Structure (PS) | | | | | | | | |
| Run-On Sentence (RO) | | | | | | | | |
| Lack of Unity (LU) | | | | | | | | |

APPENDIX IV COMPOSITION TEXTS

(1) On a Rainy Day

Very few people welcome rain, because it is depressing. Rain makes the road muddy, hinders business, spoils plans, makes us feel gloomy and creates dullness. Certainly, rain is usually not a good thing. But as far as I am concerned, rain means a lot to me, for it changes my life completely.

When I was a little boy, I was very popular at school. I always got good grades and won the first prize. Besides, I could get everything I want from my parents. Gradually, I became more arrogant and stingy. I would not let my brother to play with my toys. Rather, I often ridiculed him for being unable to get high marks and please our parents.

One day, when school was over, it suddenly rained cats and dogs. I was at my wit's end and didn't know how to go home. All of a sudden, there wonderfully appeared the most unforgettable sight in my whole life — my brother ran all the way to bring me an umbrella. I was so moved and ashamed that I could not speak out a word. My eyes were full of tears. I plucked up my courage to confess to him how terribly sorry I was. But to my great surprise my brother said, "Never mind, let bygones be bygones!" I flushed and felt so ashamed that I would like to find a hole to hide in.

From then on, I have come to the awareness of many noble virtues such as modesty, kindness, and thoughtfulness. These make my life more meaningful and worthwhile. Oh! dear rain,

I love you, for you have led me to the right way of life!

(2) On a Rainy Day

The alarm clock rang. It showed 6:30 on the clock, but it was still as dark as midnight. There was no sign of sunlight anywhere, only the sound of raindrops dripping onto the window. No doubt, it was a rainy day, an annoying type of day that I disliked the most.

I jumped out of bed, and wondered how I was to kill time on this day of boredom. I turned on the stereo, and listened for a while, to Mozart's "Fine Kleire Naktmusic." Somehow, it sounded a little better than usual, as if the notes created by the friction of string and bow were drifting merrily in the moist air. Watching the record go round and round under the dim light, I could picture a joyful party of 17th-century men and women, delightfully dancing in a huge ballroom, forgetting all the dispairs and miseries of life. Was it true? Or was it sheer imagination? The image was so vivid that I hesitate to decide.

After this "unexpected joy", I felt wonderful throughout the whole day. Recalling this day. I have a feeling that it is the most significant day in my life, because it's when I learned a good lesson -- not to have a disliking for things before you have a complete view of it. Changes can happen easily. Rain may be a nuisance, but again, it may become a source of joy when you look at it from another angle. The contemporary novelist J. R. R. Tolkiens once wrote a poem to praise changes like these it goes:

All that is gold does not glitter. Not all those who wander

are lost.

The old that is strong will not wither, Deep roots aren't reached by the frost.

From the darkness a fire shall be worken, A light from the shadows shall spring.

Renewed will be the blade that was broken, The crownless again shall be king!

Fortune tellers predicted the death of Ronald Reagan in 1980, but he lived all the same. Soviet leader Konstantin Chernenko succeeded Yuri Andropov with delight, but he is now in a not-very-pleasant health condition. Many people regard Taiwan as "a place that lacks safety", and seek ways to immigrate to the west. But, "the crownless, again, shall be king". Future changes might make the ROC one of the best places in the world! "Believe in changes, and never be prejudiced", a voice seemed to have thundered in the rain. I really learned a lot, and grew a lot wiser, all on this rainy day!

(3) The Wisest Thing I Ever Did

Though I'm not a very wise boy, yet I've done many things I think wise in my life. The thing impressed me most is a robbery which happened to me a little over two years ago, and it's the wisest and most unregrettable thing I ever did.

It was five o'clock or so in the evening, and it was raining steadily, I was shopping in Far East Department Store. Two robbers followed in secret, masquerading as shoppers, after my back. Nothing strange I felt, for a department store is a public

place everybody can visit. Every time I paid for what I got, they looked intentionally at my wallet. By degrees, I turned anxious and cautious, and realized the reason why they followed after me all the time, for I actually had much money with me and they looked sort of fierce. Finally, to a corner where there were few people, they whispered around my ears, "Little boy, listen as long as you utter a word, we will kill you. We are lacking in money, we are criminals in large, and we have pistols in our pockets. You have much money. We know." At the moment, came here two soldiers with good-looking uniforms. When they came near me, I jumped powerfully to them and embraced them. There two robbers were much surprised and ran away rapidly.

Judging from the aforementioned thing I ever did, I think it necessary to compose ourselves, when any emergency occurs to us.

(4) The Wisest Thing I Ever Did

I believe that everybody had done many wise things, and it is a thing which made you happy. As I had done something, although it wasn't wonderful, I felt happy.

The wisest one of I ever did, it is wisest that I entered high school. Because this beautiful school brings information and happy times for me. It is nearly three years since I entered this high school. I not only learned how to keep friendship but learned good manners. I think that everybody of my classmates is the same as I. We have many fine teachers. They like to take care of their own children too, and help us pass many worries. Thank to

their love made me grow up in past of mental and spirit.

I remember I was a bad student because frient with bad men. When I was younger student, I don't know what is honest, what is deligence. But since I entered this high school, I do know them. Because teachers kind teach made me become good student.

I remember, too, I was even don't study hard and only thing enjoy all day. Teachers still teached me and made me known it is students' duty to study hard. I even said "I don't know what is diligent", until teachers told me that diligent is the key to success. I am not feggent it forever.

As you saw this English composition, whethers you consider it is wister or not. I even did many thing, however, it is wistest.

APPENDIX V MODEL COMPOSITIONS

N.B.: The models are not provided for the purpose of copying, but, rather, as clear examples of the author's teaching experience.

A. DESCRIPTION

The First Day at School

It is important for you to learn some rules to follow on the first day of school. For instance, do not be late to class. In other words, please try to come on time every day. Furthermore, be in class every day. Do not miss too many hours. Finally, study hard and do your homework carefully every night. Otherwise, you will not learn quickly. Please follow these regulations, and you will do well.

When I Left Home

The first time that I did not live with my family, I was very homesick. My friend from home lived near me, and I visited her every day. We stayed together all the time and remembered nice things about home. During those moments, we often talked about our friends and family. We discussed our feelings with each other. After that, we used to call our families. I

used the telephone very often at that time. I wanted to see my family very soon after I left home.

B. NARRATION

The Most Frightening Experience I Have Had

My most frightening experience happened when I was sixteen and traveling around Taiwan island for the first time. While I was at the airport at Ma-kung, the clerk told me that my airplane ticket was not valid; consequently, I couldn't use it. That was my most horrible moment! After I waited twelve of my most frustrating hours, the airlines put me on one flight, but sent all my belongings on another. Of all the passengers, I had the smallest number of things to carry. Moreover, I had very little money because I had to spend most of it on my new plane ticket. My wallet was probably the lightest of all. It was the scariest experience of my life when it happened; nevertheless, since then, it has become my most enjoyable story to tell.

The Surprise Party

Last year my friends gave me a wonderful surprise that I will never forget. In the afternoon, they invited me to their house in order to play a game. However, before I arrived, my friends made a wonderful dinner for me. Then, they asked me to go to a movie with

them. Suddenly, they brought me a beautiful cake for my birthday. After we happily ate the cake, they offered me some presents. I did not open the presents until they wanted me to. In short, birthdays are pleasant when friends do nice things for each other.

C. PROCESS

How to Learn English

In order to learn English it is important to do three things. First, students must study very seriously without wasting time. Indeed, good English students are hard workers. Second, language learners should speak English carefully. In other words, they had better not become lazy by speaking their native languages. Third, students of English ought to read many different books. Reading is good for vocabulary and is useful for improving comprehension. It is difficult to learn a language; accordingly, a person can learn English very fast by doing these things.

Coming Home

When you follow these directions, it is easy to find my house. First, take the bus three stops and get off at Hwai-an Street. Next, cross the tracks and get on the ordinary train to Hsin-chu, which is seven more stations. After that, go upstairs and head for the

bus stop which is right outside the station. Then ride the No. 7 bus until Chu-tung and get off there. Start to walk north for three blocks and turn left. Finally, continue left for one block until the traffic light, where you will see my house. Call me if you get lost!

D. COMPARISON AND CONTRAST

My New and Old Schools

For one thing after I transferred. I realized that my new school would be more difficult. While I had always been an A student before, I now receive Bs and B minuses on my papers and exams. Another difference is that the students seem older and less friendly. In my old school there were many social clubs and dances, whereas here there are none at all. Even the campus looks different with its modern buildings and spotless lawns. It is clear that my new schools is very different from the old one.

Two Friends

My two friends have similar and different characteristics, such as appearance, personality and hobbies. Wendy is short and black. In contrast, Lisa is taller than Wendy, and Lisa's hair is much darker and curlier than Wendy's. Wendy is the shy type and doesn't

talk loudly when other people are there. On the other hand, Lisa is more outgoing than Wendy and likes to speak more. Both Lisa and Wendy enjoy doing different things, and they do them well. For instance, Wendy is a folk dancer, and she dances more gracefully than Lisa, but Lisa can play basketball better than Wendy. Wendy and Lisa are friends, for this reason, other people like to compare them.

E. CAUSE AND EFFECT

Why We Eat

I am certain that we eat for more reasons than just providing our bodies with the energy they need to function. For instance, some people are very particular about what they eat for nourishment, and food becomes a sensual pleasure for them. Others use food as they cook elaborate and unusual meals. But one of the most important reasons for eating, from my point of view, is the social fulfillment it gives when family and friends come together to share the events of the day and ideas as well as the food. It seems to me that these reasons for eating may be as important as the need for nourishment.

Is TV a Good Substitute for the Daily Newspaper?

I do not think that is true. Although many people

rely on the television news for information about the current world situation, the programs do not inform the public enough in order for them to understand what is happening. If the news in a half-hour television broadcast were written down, it would fill only one and a half columns in a newspaper. On the other hand, newspapers and magazines go into detail and give much more background and information to the reader. I believe that those who insist that television news is a good substitute for the daily newspaper are probably lazy and do not want to take time to read.

APPENDIX VI TOPICS FOR EFL COMPOSITION

N.B.: The writing topics are grouped in terms of specific rhetorical functions. Though primarily directed toward high school students, they can be adapted to college students since the writing process is essentially the same at all levels.

A. DESCRIPTION

1. My favorite present.
2. The first time I left home.
3. The most beautiful spot I know.
4. A tropical sunset.
5. Spring in the country.
6. Scenic beauty nearby.
7. A typhoon.
8. A scene for a photographer.
9. January.
10. What my study table looks like.
11. The main street of my home town.
12. Classroom atmosphere.
13. Getting a meal in a crowded restaurant.
14. An old shop.
15. A plan for a recreation room.
16. My pastimes.
17. Interesting people.

18. Sounds at night.
19. My window.
20. My street.
21. The supermarket.
22. My purchase.
23. Interior of a business house (shoe repair shop, barber shop, music store).
24. A lonesome road.
25. Colors in everyday life.
26. An impressive sight.
27. Rural Taiwan as I see it.
28. A local building (interior or exterior).
29. School sounds.
30. The most horrible sight I ever saw.
31. A meal at a quick-lunch counter.
32. A typical railway station.
33. Home of a famous person.
34. My favorite haunt.
35. An efficient kitchen.
36. A favorite restaurant.
37. A street scene.
38. Strolling down Main Street.
39. The home town drugstore.
40. A trip on a jet plane.
41. Sunday dinner. (Family dinner.)
42. The auto of the future.
43. Our home.
44. A mysterious sound.
45. A rainy day.

46. Bargain day.
47. The art of seeing things.
48. The well-dressed man or woman.
49. The most disreputable building I ever saw.
50. An interesting holiday in
51. The look and feel of dusk.
52. Clouds.
53. Footsteps.
54. A train whistle.
55. Inventions I haven't yet perfected.
56. The window.
57. The Chinese of the eighties.
58. A college campus.
59. Customs in our school.
60. My room.
61. The ideal home, (room).
62. Current costumes.
62. My English (mathematics/history) class.
63. Seven o'clock Saturday night.
64. The mid-autumn festival.
65. Our campus in the spring (or any other season).
66. A drop of water.
67. A school bell.
68. An airplane overhead.
69. A bus going uphill.
70. An incident.
71. How to eat a grapefruit.
72. Automobile horns.
73. A dance.

74. A Christmas card.
75. Faces.
76. A game.
77. Hypocrisy.
78. The inner city.
79. My sense of smell.
80. Night on the streets of Taipei (or any other city).
81. Profiles in courage.
82. What color is love?
83. What is a man?
84. The year 2000.
85. Today's heroes.
86. Description of a dream (night-mare)—real or fictional.
87. Euphemism—"Telling It Like It Isn't."
88. Highways.
89. I love Taipei (any city).
90. A fastfoot restaurant.
91. My school.
92. My favorite book (holiday, TV program, food).
93. Why I am thankful.
94. Why I like (do not like) school.
95. Five things in the world I would change.
96. Things I don't like.
97. A sport I like.
98. How I feel in the dark.
99. A funny dream.
100. When I was little.
101. The things I like to touch.
102. Describe your personality.

103. How my family celebrates the New Years Day. (or any-
other holiday)
104. What makes me happy when I am sick.
105. A present I would like.
106. My biggest worry.
107. The thing I treasure most.
108. When school is out.
109. A hot day in summer.
110. I saw it.
111. A mosquito.
112. A cloud.
113. A dream.
114. A chilly winter morning.
115. The stars.
116. The sun.
117. A TV set.
118. A train whistle.
119. People I can do without.
120. What I saw on the way home from school yesterday.
121. A cool swim on a hot day.
122. A sunny day in winter.
123. A windy day.
124. A clock.
125. New Year's morning.
126. The perfect place to live.
127. The new leaves.
128. My neighborhood.
129. An exciting game.
130. Walking in the rain.

131. It's morning again.
132. A puppy.
133. The flowers in the winter.
134. A traditional Chinese New Year.
135. My favorite commercial.
136. The moon.
137. The house (apartment) I live in.
138. A person in action.
139. What New Year means to me.
140. The funniest thing I ever saw.
141. What friendship (money/love/war) means to me.
142. The happiest day of my life.
143. What I like about school.
144. What is happiness.
145. What makes me cry?
146. A dream I had.
147. The things I fear.
148. The place I like to explore.
149. I remember.
150. I suppose.
151. A strange dream.
152. A good teacher.
153. The method of travel I enjoy most.
154. The real me.
155. What I am really like?
156. How I see myself?
157. My favorite aunt (uncle).
158. My favorite kind of person.
159. My best friend.

160. He made me laugh.
161. The famous person I would like to be.
162. The most unusual person I know.
163. My first friend.
164. Trees in winter.
165. My pet.
166. I'm a lazy kitten.
167. My favorite animal.
168. How a tree feels on a cold night.
169. The first time I left home.
170. Outside my window.
171. My day.
172. Every summer (spring/autumn/winter).

B. NARRATION

1. The most frightening experience I have had.
2. The surprise party.
3. The happiest day in my life.
4. My most exciting day.
5. My favorite day.
6. My most memorable day.
7. My nicest birthday party.
8. My birthday wish.
9. A holiday story.
10. A birthday surprise.
11. On Saturday, I
12. How my family spent the Double Tenth.

13. The years I was in the primary school.
14. On Christmas Eve, I'll feel
15. On Sunday morning, I
16. I wonder why
17. A million in one and I had to
18. I was so afraid when
19. I found a
20. I wish that
21. I slowly lifted the lid and
22. When I am bigger than my dad, I will be glad because
23. When it is the last day of school, I will be
24. Why I enjoy
25. I remember how scared I was when
26. When I have been naughty, I feel
27. I was almost frightened to death once when
28. When I rake leaves, I
29. I floated on a cloud and
30. So I said to my mother
31. I didn't mean to do it.
32. We did it together.
33. How can explain what I've done?
34. Why did it have to be me?
35. The day I walked on stilts.
36. Someone made fun of me.
37. My dog is lost.
38. If I could be part of my favorite TV show.
39. If I had a day off from school, I would
40. The step outside my door.
41. One day I went downtown.

42. What I think about before I fall asleep.
43. My most exciting time.
44. My first haircut.
45. My first report card.
46. My autobiography.
47. Something I remember from the time when I was little
(an incident which is representative of much of the child's
experience).
48. When I broke a rule (trouble at home or school).
49. When I loved me (a proud or very happy time).
50. When I cried boo-hoo (a sad time in life).
51. How I was frightened.
52. My most disappointing moment.
53. It couldn't happen to me—but it did.
54. I was so embarrassed.
55. Was I sick!
56. I was so scared.
57. Once I dreamed.
58. The funniest thing I ever saw.
59. I learned my lesson.
60. I'll never forget this.
61. The best thing that ever happened to me.
62. Each minute seemed like an hour.
63. Playing the game.
64. The trial.
65. Caught in the act.
66. At last the day was over.
67. The discovery of bubble gum.
68. Dear John.

69. The accidental wonder.
70. My proudest (happiest, saddest) moment.
71. And then it happened.
72. There were strange footprints in the sand.
73. A funny story.
74. Late for school.
75. Lost in a wilderness.
76. There is only one way to do something—that is
77. What would happen if
78. When it starts to get cold, animals
79. Winter animals are
80. She returned to the empty room but something had moved.
81. A baby chick can
82. Let's go fly a kite and
83. My first fight.
84. My first encounter with the law.
85. My first job.
86. My first spanking. (On being punished for the first time.)
87. My first dollar.
88. My first ten years were the hardest.
89. My most important decision and why I made it.
90. My most embarrassing moment.
91. The most stupid thing I ever did.
92. My most serious accident.
93. My narrowest escape.
94. The longest minute I ever spent.
95. The wisest thing I ever did.
96. Prize memory of the year. (Regrets of the year.)
97. A Christmas thrill. (Christmas this year.)

98. Thoughts on New Year's Eve.
99. An unforgettable experience.
100. The fun of being sick.
101. Moving into a strange town.
102. Learning to like vegetables (or other foods).
103. One of life's comedies (or tragedies) in which I played a star part.
104. Things I have lost.
105. A mistake I vow never to repeat. (I'll never do that again.)
106. The dog (or other pet) in my life.
107. I sold papers. (A job I have held.) (My summer job.)
108. Musical memories. (Songs my mother taught me.)
109. Memories of home.
110. What I learned from Dad.
111. A tradition (or custom) in our family (neighborhood, section, state, or country).
112. How my family celebrates the Dragon-Boat festival (or some other holiday).
113. The origin of my family name.
114. My ancestors. (Page from my family history.)
115. Meet the family.
116. What I have inherited.
117. An inexpensive good time.
118. An experiment I once tried.
119. My big moment.
120. Happy ending.
121. I expected too much.
122. I was in a hurry, and

123. I don't feel that way any more. (I've changed my mind.)
124. I was scared.
125. That was a vacation! ("Having a wonderful time.")
126. A trip to the fair (church, theater, zoo).
127. A sports event I will never forget.
128. An obstacle I overcame (or must overcome).
129. The little red schoolhouse. (kindergarten as I remember it.)
130. Growing pains.
131. My life and hard times. (Hard times behind me.)
132. My experience in hospitals. (My operation.)
133. It shouldn't happen to a dog.
134. He who hesitates is lost.
135. My conscience is my guide.
136. Childhood ambitions.
137. A strong influence in my life.
138. I learn from experience.
139. My housing problem.
140. Houses I remember.
141. The best class period this semester.
142. I kept my New Year's resolution.
143. What I have learned in English. (history, etc.)
144. An important decision.
145. The world I left behind.
146. An unusual incident.
147. I was there.
148. A day I would like to forget.
149. Too far from home.
150. A tense moment.

151. I remember Mama.
152. Clouds in the sky.
153. I was a hero.
154. My most embarrassing mistake.
155. If I could do it over.
156. Too early in the morning.
157. How I learned to read.
158. Champion!
159. A final farewell.
160. The wrong key.
161. In one ear.
162. The last day of school.
163. Over the bounding main.
164. A difficult decision.
165. I knew it would happen.
166. A simple pleasure.
167. Some family treasure.
168. Someone's hands.
169. The way someone walks.
170. My first football game (or any game).
171. The total effect of a costume.
172. How a particular event in my life made me a different person.
173. I perished twice.
174. It's easier to blame others.
175. A clear conscience is better (worse) than popularity.
176. Is pride a primitive trait?
177. What I would do if I knew I would lose my sight tomorrow.

178. Is maturity a relative thing?
179. The mental blindness of the human race.
180. What is more beautiful—the simple or the ornate?
181. The continuity of human experience.
182. The real me.
183. Worry.
184. How am I doing?
185. Why I (dis)like my name.
186. Why . . . is my favorite sport.
187. Why I like a small town.
188. Why I go to church.
189. Why I shall go to college.
190. Why . . . is my favorite picture.
191. Why I do (not) play cards.
192. Why I like poetry.
193. Why I like music.
194. Why I believe in immortality.
195. Why I do not believe in divorce.
196. Why I want to be a
197. Why I like to read novels.
198. Why I prefer jazz to classical music (or vice versa).
199. Why I don't like comic strips.
200. My idea of hard work.
201. My idea of a good dinner.
202. My idea of a good course.
203. My idea of a gentleman (or a lady).
204. My idea of a dull evening.
205. My idea of a perfect school.
206. How colors affect me.

207. How I feel in a dentist's chair.
208. How I feel when I have not prepared a lesson (or for an exam).
209. How I judge character.
210. How I read a newspaper.
211. How can I find time to study?
212. How new clothes affect me.
213. How I would invest one thousand dollars.
214. How I treat nosy people.
215. How much am I influenced by advertising?
216. What animal I should like to be for a day.
217. What I like in music or art.
218. What I don't like (or do like) about Taiwan.
219. What I get out of music.
220. What's wrong with my home town.
221. What I think about science (laboratories, student participation in extracurricular activities, air travel).
222. What I want from life.
223. What I think about athletics.
224. Where am I going?
225. What I really enjoy doing.
226. If I were a TV reporter.
227. If I had but three days to live.
228. If I were mayor of my home town.
229. If I were president.
230. My future as I see it.
231. My favorite pastime.
232. My favorite breed of dog.
233. My favorite hero in fiction.

234. My hobby and why I like it.
235. My book (play, movie) of the year.
236. My favorite subject.
237. The finest movie I have ever seen.
238. My favorite writer.
239. My philosophy.
240. My dream vacation.
241. My favorite musical composer and why I like him.
242. My record collection.
243. My ambition.
244. My favorite prejudice.
245. My favorite spectator sport.
246. My favorite extracurricular activity.
247. My favorite magazine.
248. My worst enemy.
249. My favorite climate.
250. My alarm clock.
251. Being lonesome.
252. The most monotonous thing in the world.
253. Things I could get along without.
254. Effects of weather on my thoughts.
255. Names: advantages and disadvantages.
256. Music I enjoy.
257. A popular movie I didn't like.
258. Who's afraid?
259. Blue Monday mood.
260. What's the use?
261. Confused.
262. A worthwhile organization to which I belong.

263. The most important day.
264. It was music to my ears.
265. I like farm life.
266. The children of my relatives.
267. A character from fiction I should like to meet.
268. Three books I want to own and why.
269. May I suggest
270. Is farm work hard?
271. Radio programs I detest. (I hate soap operas.)
272. I scrub for my education.
273. A perfect job.
274. Examinations are a bother.
275. The day I received my driver's license.
276. An effective way to envision history is to read fiction.
277. A fear I overcame.
278. The generation gap.
279. I cut my hair.
280. I had to decide.
281. I saw it happen: why did it?
282. In the presence of my peers.
283. The joys of being a car owner.
284. The less brilliant moments in my life.
285. The moon—what next?
286. My biggest gripe.
287. My encounters with sex discrimination.
288. My experiences as a babysitter.
289. My first semester in high school.
290. My idea of a perfect day.
291. My opinion of poetry.

292. One of my favorite movies.
293. One of my favorite television shows.
294. On learning
295. An open letter to my parents.
296. A person to whom I am grateful.
297. The relevancy of school.
298. Rewards of nature.
299. Those were the good old days.
300. Three things worse than death.
301. A typical day in my life.
302. What I like best about summer.
303. What I have learned from my father (mother/teacher).
304. What I dislike most about Christmas (or some other holiday).
305. What would have happened if
306. When I feel most independent.
307. Why I'd change a rule in my school.
308. Why I like rock music.
309. The world in which I live.
310. How the English program at my school should be changed.
311. All that glitters are not gold.
312. The most valuable thing I have learned.
313. An important decision.
314. Local crudities (or curiosities).
315. Fire!
316. A curious dream.
317. The art of conversation.
318. I should have known.
319. On favorite colors.

320. Let me cry on your shoulder.
321. Lest we forget.
322. Nurses are angels.
323. On a rainy day.
324. Pride before a fall.
325. The tribulations of a junior high school student.
326. Soap operas.
327. Why all the excitement?
328. Winter night on the radio.
329. Tied to the apron strings.
330. Table manners.
331. Mental cruelty.
332. What a home ought to be.
333. Radio commercials.
334. Why people have hobbies.
335. Borrowing and lending.
336. The kinds of friends who wear well.
337. Local weather.
338. Maturity has its drawbacks.
339. On a shoestring.
340. A real champion.
341. Going, going, gone.
342. The blue ribbon.
343. The world in which I live.
344. Cats are a nuisance (blessing).
345. The advantages of being a hermit.
346. "Look for the silver lining."
347. Borrowing.
348. Today's slang.

349. The value of pessimism.
350. The values of sleep.
351. Choosing a hat.
352. Different ways of washing dishes.
353. Telling fortunes.
354. On a dog.
355. The art of being friendly.
356. If I had twenty-four hours to live.
357. What it means to be poor.
358. Saturday night.
359. Things are tough all over.
360. Twins.
361. Skeleton in the closet.
362. Cosmetics: theoretical and applied.
363. Reading for pleasure.
364. Quizzes.
365. What is tact?
366. Amateur dramatics.
367. Mother picks a school for me.
368. Brotherly love.
369. Fishing.
370. My idol.
371. What is a dog's life?
372. How intelligent is a horse?
373. Baby-tending, a harrowing job.
374. If anyone told the truth.
375. A person I have almost forgotten.
376. My friend . . . (someone of a different, race or nationality).
377. A person I can't bear.

378. My favorite teacher (relative, neighbor).
379. The most wonderful person I know.
380. A first-rate teacher.
381. My distinguished ancestor.
382. My best friend.
383. A person who has influenced my life.
384. What I learned from Dad. (In defense of Dad.) (My Dad.)
385. The most prominent citizen in my home town.
386. The most disreputable person I ever saw.
387. A person I will never forget.
388. A brief sketch of myself (any age, any mood).
389. Meet the Doctor (Dentist).
390. A deficiency in Chinese education.
391. Can a smart student flunk?
392. Classroom morals.
393. Who deserves an education?
394. Red tape.
395. Where students are likely to break down.
396. The essential requirements of a good teacher.
397. Students are smarter than teachers believe.
398. Vacations are too short (or too long).
399. Schools try to do too much.
400. A fad in our school.
401. The three R's—plus Reasoning.
402. The student's role in modern life.
403. Social prestige in school.
404. What makes a course popular with students?
405. The place of science in education.
406. Some reasons students fail examinations.

- 407. Sex education should be compulsory.
- 408. Some advantages of a teacher's life.
- 409. Extracurricular activities.

C. PROCESS

- 1. How to learn English.
- 2. Coming home.
- 3. How to care for a cat (or any animal).
- 4. How to spend Sunday.
- 5. How to develop self-control.
- 6. How to find happiness.
- 7. How to keep your girl (boy) friend.
- 8. How to track a wild animal.
- 9. How to prepare my favorite dish.
- 10. How to cure a cold.
- 11. How to take good snapshots.
- 12. How to take notes.
- 13. How to criticize music.
- 14. How to make an ice cream soda.
- 15. How to keep friends.
- 16. How to spend a weekend.
- 17. How to show cattle.
- 18. How to loaf intelligently.
- 19. How to plan a garden.
- 20. How to entertain the family.
- 21. How to dress a baby.
- 22. How to paper a room.

23. How to be popular.
24. How to grow tomatoes (or any vegetable, grain, or flower).
25. How to choose a friend.
26. How to solve the housing problem.
27. How to prepare ground for planting.
28. How to make coffee.
29. How a camera takes pictures.
30. How to write a good theme.
31. How to be nonchalant when embarrassed.
32. How to study systematically.
33. How seeds scatter.
34. How to prepare for an examination.
35. How to plan a meal.
36. How to avoid air tragedies.
37. How to cure insomnia.
38. How our club is financed.
39. How to get along with a brother (or sister).
40. How to enjoy music.
41. How a band moves into a formation.
42. How to give a gentle hint.
43. How to leave a party.
44. How to make an impression on a girl (or boy).
45. How to learn a part in a play.
46. How to administer artificial respiration.
47. How (not) to prepare for a journey.
48. How to cook an omelet.
49. How to review a book.
50. How to develop film.
51. How to spend your time profitably while standing in line.

52. How to clean a desk.
53. How to enjoy a vacation.
54. How to hunt with a camera.
55. How to sleep in class.
56. How to approach Dad.
57. How I would change present (traffic, food, education) laws.
58. Learning to ride a horse.
59. Do's and don'ts for basketball fans.
60. Tinkering with machinery.
61. Steps in making a garden.
62. A good party game.
63. In case of fire
64. Making something out of nothing.
65. Making social organizations successful.
66. Planning a small farm.
67. How to ride on a bike.
68. Teaching a bird to talk.
69. A complicated play in basketball or football (use diagrams).
70. Helps for puzzle fiends.
71. How to "psych out" a teacher.
72. How to play a game.
73. How to spend an enjoyable evening in
74. Plan for a garden.
75. Where automobiles are likely to break down.
76. How I write a personal letter.
77. Choosing a wardrobe.
78. Earning one's way.
79. The best scheme I ever heard of to make money.

80. Making a hobby profitable.
81. Miracles nature never thought of.
82. A good floor plan.
83. How books are classified in a library.
84. A chairman's (or speaker's) duties in a group discussion.
85. How to enjoy literature.
86. How to converse.

D. COMPARISON AND CONTRAST

1. My new and old schools.
2. Two friends.
3. Now and then.
4. Film and theater.
5. Taipei versus Kaohsiung as a vacation spot (or two other cities).
6. Why a good workman may not be a good foreman.
7. Effective and ineffective radio (or television) advertising.
8. Comparisons of men and women drivers.
9. Formal education versus business experience.
10. Evils and virtues of competition.
11. North and South.
12. East and West in education.
13. Studying in the library and in my room.
14. Large school versus small school.
15. My school and the ideal school.
16. My taste in books—then and now.
17. Chinese and American movies.

18. Living on the farm, in the city, in the small town.
19. Radio (or television) advertising then and now.
20. Television and movies.
21. Two Christmases.
22. Home was never like this.
23. Today's student problems.
24. The arts—present and past.
25. The difference between friendship and love.
26. Plane versus train travel.
27. A contrast between living and existing.
28. Flag waving versus patriotism.
29. Then and now: entertainment, war, dress, courting, farming, education.
30. Compare: book and movie.
31. Before and after.
32. What I am compared with what I want to be.
33. Farm machinery today and yesterday.
34. English rugby versus American football.
35. Two books (stories, poems) by the same author.
36. My mother (father) disagrees with me.
37. My tastes in movies have changed.
38. Television versus radio as entertainment.
39. I was younger then.
40. Our society at its best and worst.
41. Stage play versus movie.
42. How World War III would differ from World War II.
43. A dog's life—and mine.

E. CAUSE AND EFFECT

1. Why we eat.
2. Is TV a good substitute for the daily newspaper?
3. Don't fail to tune in on . . . tonight.
4. The only way to travel.
5. Borrowing as a good policy.
6. Let there be music.
7. The horse must come before the cart.
8. All food prices off.
9. Gambling on sports isn't funny.
10. Everyone needs some kind of religion.
11. Generals rule the world.
12. Roadside advertising.
13. "Honor thy father and thy mother."
14. The need for precision.
15. Race prejudice must go.
16. The case for relaxation.
17. Be a nonconformist.
18. Don't count too much on first impressions.
19. Smaller homes.
20. Raise teachers' pay.
21. Tariffs must be boosted to protect Chinese farmers.
22. Decorations must be functional.
23. Foreign customs we should borrow.
24. How I would change present traffic laws.
25. The best sport to watch.
26. Decline of courtesy.
27. There ought to be a law.

28. Live and let live.
29. We should have the honor system.
30. Chinese youth need education in happy family living.
31. Suggestions for the improvement of English courses.
32. We need a course in
33. What a home ought to be.
34. Let's have better movies.
35. One argument against war.
36. Reforms needed in the field of education.
37. Outlining is practical.
38. Compulsory education to the age of eighteen.
39. The ideal plan to give Chinese the best possible medical care.
40. Give me a small school.
41. Youth is the time for experiment.
42. Do athletics injure the body?
43. Why we can be proud of our school.
44. Let us choose our own friends (courses, etc.)
45. Do athletics build character?
46. Comics serve a purpose.
47. Should income taxes be reduced?
48. Should the United States take the lead in world disarmament?
49. Should eighteen-year-olds be allowed to vote?
50. Compulsory military training.
51. Defense contracts.
52. Environmental crises.
53. The failures of our present educational system.
54. The future of the railroads.

55. The futility of war.
56. Give the young a change!
57. Health care.
58. How youth can bring about social change.
59. In defense of marriage and the family.
60. Compulsory military training for girls.
61. Destroy the atomic bomb formula.
62. Do we spend our time wisely?
63. Merits of the younger (older) generation.
64. The case against student demonstrations.
65. Censorship.
66. The Chinese puzzle.
67. Concentration on technological and scientific progress
and neglect of moral and spiritual values will ruin our
country.
68. Drugs.
69. The ethics of labor unions.
70. Farm subsidies.
71. Gambling in professional sports.
72. Gun control.
73. How much land does a man need?
74. Humanity, in history, has always crucified its pioneers.
75. Is our grading system fair?
76. Legalized gambling.
77. Work your way through college?
78. Why learn foreign languages?
79. Do engineers need liberal arts courses?
80. English courses should not be required of all students.
81. Who said progress?

82. It's a mistake to subsidize athletes.
83. Advertising pays, or does it?
84. Is our grading system fair?
85. Simplified spelling.
86. Is football being commercialized?
87. The advantages (or disadvantages) of having too many friends.
88. Are depressions inevitable?
89. Should teachers organize?
90. Scientists: on tap or on top?
91. Advantages of good business ethics.
92. Consolidation of rural schools.
93. Scientific advances justify wars.
94. Are too many people going to college?
95. What this country needs is aggressive young men.
96. Drugs—bane or blessing?
97. Intelligence tests—so-called.
98. Exams—good or bad idea?
99. Why get married?
100. Television is too commercialized.
101. What our school needs most.
102. Should grades be abolished?
103. Chinese advertising—a study in change of Chinese values.
104. Care of the elderly.
105. Causes of juvenile delinquency.

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