reading his paper, i.e., to give him a sense of audience; and 2) to help the response-writer learn to read well, to understand and articulate his own reading experience. By the second half of the course, some of the responses a student writes each time are drafts of papers in themselves. I comment regularly on the responses where needed as well as on the papers, and we frequently discuss response-writing in class.

The author's written reaction following the discussion of his paper, in the words of one student's course evaluation, "allowed me to 'mouth off' and express my gripes about the responses without hurting anybody's feelings." It serves another purpose as well; for in the process of explaining what the idea was he was really trying to develop, a student often finds that he has rewritten the troublesome part of his essay.

By the time a paper reaches me, I am in the grader's ideal position, having eight or so commentators, including the author, against whom to weigh the response I formed on first reading. Besides providing help with mechanics and assigning a grade to each effort, I simply continue from my own perspective the discussion begun by the author's reaction. Our discussion is furthered also by two required half-hour individual conferences, one after the second paper to make sure the student is discovering the kinds of things he wants to write about, and one before the penultimate out-of-class paper. I cancel three hours of class time for each of these rounds of conferences.

As is perhaps evident, a strongly held philosophy of language use underlies this course structure (and all those hours at the ditto machine). Epistemological underpinnings may be located in the thought of the philosopher Michael Polanyi (e.g., Meaning, Chicago, 1975). I also draw upon a "rhetoric" (which, however, I find unusable as a text) by James E. Miller, Jr., The Rhetoric of Imagination. The method itself was worked out by Professor Leonard Engel of Washington State University.

A result of this philosophical orientation is that I do not hold generalized discussions about matters of rhetoric or style. On the Polanyian principle that no tools, or set of symbols (like a set of muscles) can be used effectively if used with "focal awareness" (see Meaning, Ch. 2), I usually restrict discussion of writing techniques to dealing with particular student texts in response to writing situations that come up. I do have one three-hour session on writing physical description and one on analyzing a literary text; but for both I use writing from the current class as well as some published writing, and keep the focus of our analysis on the qualities of experience, of mind, of sensorium, which were engaged in the skillful act of writing.

Linguistics and Composition:
Teaching Writing as a Second Dialect

Marie Hatkevich

The relationship between the teaching of writing and the field of linguistics has been a rather tenuous one throughout much of the existence of linguistics as a scientific discipline. Despite the fact that studies
have shown little or no significant improvement in writing skills as a result of linguistically based instruction, educational devotees of linguistics continue to promise that "the objective study of the English language" carried into the composition classroom will improve students' writing skills. Very few linguists, in fact, believe that the discipline can or should be directly applied in the classroom as either content or technique.

Linguistics does, however, offer an analytical perspective on language that a composition instructor can profitably apply in his teaching. Similar to that which linguists have established in the teaching of English as a second language (ESL), this perspective centers on the real distinction between the spoken and written forms of language. Whereas the ESL teacher focuses primarily on teaching the verbal forms of English, the composition instructor works solely on the written format. In essence, while the ESL and composition teachers are dealing with the same language, they are very significantly focusing on different levels or even dialects. Each level of the language, in turn, has its own distinctive signals, patterns, and conventions. To master the spoken level, which most children accomplish in the early school years, is not necessarily to learn to communicate effectively on the written level. Writing, in effect, must be taught and practiced.

Many common problems in both the mechanical and abstract areas of composition stem from the interference of the verbal forms and patterns of English with the written structures and conventions. Writing is not simply "a secondary visual representation of speech" (Bloch and Trager, Outline of Linguistic Analysis, Linguistic Society of America, 1952).

On the purely mechanical (nevertheless meaningful) level, writing uses punctuation where speaking involves stress, pitch, juncture, and rhythm. Because punctuation does not necessarily correspond to the oral patterns, we have, for example, the frequent misuse of the comma. Again on the mechanical level, we have paragraph indentation in writing but no really comparable signal in speech. Perhaps this indicates that we do not have the concept of a paragraph or as tight an organizational unit in normal, unplanned speech. When speaking, one is allowed to be somewhat less deliberate and more redundant than when writing. Effective written communication hinges on the logical development and organization of an idea in as clear and concise manner as possible. Also because the distance between a writer and his reader is certainly greater in both physical and temporal terms than that between a speaker and listener, the writer does not see the puzzled expression on his reader's face. As a result, he cannot go back to the confusing point and, as a speaker can, explain the idea again with different words or examples.

While the use of commas, the idea of paragraph development and organization, and the concepts of audience and effectiveness are but a few of the problems, one can certainly see how wide-ranging the difficulties of working with two levels or dialects of language can be. In many cases, the composition teacher is dealing with what the ESL teacher would call "premature fluency"—the phenomenon where the student tries to carry the patterns and conventions of the system he already knows to the one he is attempting to learn. Composition students do have difficulty making the transition from the more spontaneous and somewhat less deliberate verbal form of language to the more deliberate and consciously organized written form. As a result, errors that range from comma splices and sentence fragments to inappropriate diction and illogical or unordered development appear in student papers.
The student needs to be aware that when he is writing he is manipulating a level of language that is by nature very different from the one he uses when he is speaking. Keeping a contrastive analysis of the characteristics of speech and writing in mind, the teacher can work from what the student already knows in order to illustrate and practice the differences between speaking and writing. By focusing on the distinctions and thus possible points of interference between the oral and written dialects, the composition instructor can develop in his students the ability to dialect or code "switch." The linguistic perception of writing and speaking as two codes, forms, levels, or dialects of the same language is thus a valuable outlook from which the composition teacher can approach many of the problems that students have in writing.

Subjects Made Simple:
A Fast-paced Approach to Improving Sentence Structure
Geraldine C. Pepecello

The next few pages briefly describe an approach to the teaching of sentence structure in the English classroom. The main goal of this exercise is to teach the recognition of subject and predicate in a sentence with the hope that recognition practice will lead to the proper utilization in original student sentences.

An examination of the information available on the notion "subject" reveals that a good deal of what the English teacher attempts in teaching students sentence structure is weighed down by terminology. This is a result of trying to teach all the forms that the subject, predicate or object of a sentence may take. Specifically, the subject of a sentence may take the form of 1) a single noun, e.g., George lost his case; 2) a noun phrase, e.g., The Case was hopeless; 3) a clause, e.g., Whoever owns the red convertible reports to the main gate; 4) an infinitive, e.g.,

To report would be wise; and, finally, 5) a gerund, e.g., Swimming is good exercise. Adjectives and adverbs may also function as subjects of sentences but these are rarely found in practical use.

The restrictions of time and student ability which the teacher is subject to force her to narrow the course objectives to the acquisition of very specific skills related to the recognition and use of the subject. These specific skills need not involve the cumbersome acquisition of all the labels that we as English teachers can apply to the aforementioned forms the subject may take. For the students that I work and have worked with these labels would provide enough frustration in their learning to result in little progress toward the goal of recognition and proper use of the subject plus predicate in a sentence.

Realizing and correctly assessing your students' needs can result in limiting many of the obstacles that most teachers of composition face. My students, for instance, had demonstrated that they did not know how to write a correct sentence, i.e., a sentence containing a subject and a predicate. They did not recognize that in any sentence there is a "doer" (the actor in the sentence) and the thing "done" (the