SHORTCOMINGS IN THE WRITTEN ENGLISH OF SPANISH-AMERICAN NINTH-GRADE PUPILS IN THE SCHOOLS OF TUCSON, ARIZONA

by

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A Thesis

submitted to the faculty of the

Department of Education

in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in the Graduate College

University of Arizona

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Approved Emil L. Larson, Director of Thesis — September 23, 1942, Date

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Method

Near the beginning of the present century at a time when experimental evidence failed to support the study of grammar as a disciplinary subject, and when formal abilities in it were found not to transfer into expressional skills, research was directed towards determining new and specific language objectives. One of the first experimental methods designed for helping determine these objectives was the error count.[1] From an early study that used this method, Charters[2] constructed language and grammar curricula in the year 1924. Numerous other studies followed the first ones until now the importance of the error-count method is firmly established as a research procedure in language improvement.

The method in brief is simply the recording of either oral or written language errors as they appear in speech or in written composition. Following this tablulation, an effort is usually made to determine the relative seriousness of the various errors.

The present study is in line with the error-counting tradition in that its problem is to discover the language errors in written

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1. The writer is especially indebted to H. A. Greene for his "Contributions of Research to Special Methods: English Usage," (Thirty-Seventh Yearbook, Part II of the National Society for the Study of Education) for a clarification of this early development.
2. Charters, W. W., Curriculum Construction., Ch. XVII, pp. 194-208.

composition. It is without precedent, so far as the writer has been able to discover, in that it considers the language errors made by Spanish-American[3] pupils in their writing of English as compared with the errors made by Anglo-American pupils. The data for this study were gathered from compositions written by ninth-grade pupils in the junior high schools of Tucson. Previous studies will be reviewed primarily to provide bases for comparisons with present findings.

Importance of the Study

In pursuing this study, the writer has held foremost in mind the improvement of classroom learning in the schools of Tucson through making accessible factual materials relating to language deficiencies. In an effort to insure the reliability and usefulness of the data, the following measures have been taken: (1) The error categories have been enlarged to cover seventy specific language errors as compared with the smaller number in former studies; (2) various statistical devices have been used in an attempt to determine the importance of specific errors and to determine whether or not the number of words studied represented a sampling; and (3) finally, the total number of words of running composition from which the errors were taken has been larger than in any of the comparable studies with the possible exception of one or two which were of similar size or larger.

The results of the study may be of importance in several direct ways. First of all, a check on the language errors made by ninth-grade

3. "Spanish-American" is generally used to denote pupils of Spanish or Mexican ancestry who speak Spanish in their homes and who learned English largely in the schools.

pupils will give the teachers of tenth-grade English, as well as ninth-grade English teachers, an idea of what they must be prepared to cope with in the future. Second, the study should point to any notable deficiencies in language learning in the grades preceding the ninth. Third, since no specific methods are used which take into account the language handicap of the Spanish-American pupils, marked deficiencies in their use of English may appear which will call for a revision of teaching practice. Fourth, and finally, the principal value of the study will lie in its function as a diagnostic test for determining language errors and for use by teachers in the elimination of them.

Delimitations

The criticism has been made that error counting as an approach to language improvement may be inferior to a method which emphasizes the acquiring of good language habits rather than the elimination of bad ones. The following section reviews several studies which show that improvement in written expression followed the use of the error-count method. Since writing free from error is basic to any written expression, the point seems to be a minor one.

Other limitations lie within the method itself. These are taken up extensively in appropriate sections and it is sufficient here to say that they are of two main types. The first limitation is that which lies in the uncertainty of getting compositions which disclose representative errors. This is important since specific errors vary to an extent with subject-matter and approach. The second limitation

is the uncertainty connected with sampling widely enough so that no appreciable change occurs in the ratio of the number of errors to the number of words from which they were taken as the total number of words is increased. To a large extent, however, these limitations may be overcome by emphasizing wide selection and quantity in obtaining compositions. The present study has included "friendly" letters, book reports, short narrations, descriptions, sequential (in point of time or steps involved) expositions, and, here and there, a bit of "inspirational" writing. While no calculation was made, it seems a fair assumption that such a variety tended to bring out a selection of representative errors. Concerning the number of compositions, a word has already been said.

Review of Related Studies

A review of related studies is of value for two reasons. The first is that a check on the results of the present study is obtained. The second is that the usefulness of the study may be substantiated by indicating how the results of previous studies have been applied in the interest of language improvement.

Concerning the first of the above, comparisons are made wherever possible between the errors of the two groups of this study, i,e., the Spanish-American and the Anglo-American groups, and the errors found in other studies. To facilitate these comparisons, the present study uses the same fourteen error categories used in the most significant of previous studies. The expansion of the number of error items in the present study makes no difference in the comparisons since

specific items in this study were grouped items in the same general categories in previous studies. These investigations are reviewed when the actual comparisons are made.

Regarding the application of the results of studies of error counts, the treatment will not be exhaustive. It is believed, however, that the summarization of two or three of the most reliable studies which have made use of the results of this method will be of value.

Rodgers[4] summarized a study made in the Los Angeles Junior High Schools. The purpose stated was:

> (1) . . . to determine the extent and nature of the grammatical errors being made by junior high school students of Los Angeles in free composition, and (2) to find a method for effecting a speedy and efficient elimination of such errors.

"The steps involved in the experiment were pre-testing, giving short daily drills, and post-testing." The pre-test was the writing of friendly letters by the pupils. These letters, 29,000 in number, were separated into four groups after being divided according to grades. The four groups represented the work of pupils of four different levels of intelligence. After they were grouped, the letters were checked and the errors tabulated. Following a three-day drill period and a post-test similar to the pre-test, it was found that errors had been reduced 19.4 per cent. Some of the more pertinent conclusions which the author of the report considered justifiable are the following:

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4. Rodgers, G. S., "A Critical Study of the Grammatical Errors of Junior High School Pupils." Los Angeles Educational Research Bulletin., 10:2-5. December, 1930.

> (1) A period of intensive and planned training can materially decrease the frequency of occurrence of ...(language) errors.
> (2) Neither grade nor I.Q. is a determining factor in the elimination of any particular type of error.
> (3) Although the frequency of grammatical errors may be alarmingly great among children of junior high school age, it may be appreciably reduced in all levels of all grades by (a) diagnosing the needs of a class and (b) giving intensive daily drill in prevalent types of error.

The present writer has examined the results of the study and feels that the conclusions are justified.

A second study conducted and reported by Thomas[5] used substantially the same procedure as was used in the above study. In this, however, the purpose was:

> ... to test a technique, the use of dictation drills and multiple response exercises, for eliminating technical language errors in written composition of ninth grade pupils.

"The specific questions which the study attempted to answer were two:"

> (1) To what extent does formal drill of the dictation and multiple response type on the more important technical English errors reduce such errors in similar formal situations?
> (2) To what extent does reduction of such errors in formal drill carry over to reduction of such errors in written composition?

To determine abilities before the drill program, the Pressey Diagnostic Tests in English Composition--(a) Capitalization, Form I, (b) Punctuation, Form I, and (c) Grammar, Form I--were given.

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5. Thomas, J. E., "The Elimination of Technical Errors in Written Composition Through Formal Drill." University of Iowa Studies in Education., 8:1-36, No. 2. October 15, 1932.

In addition, especially made tests for dictation exercises and for English mechanics were given. Finally, each pupil wrote a composition on one of several assigned subjects. Pupils were then divided into nearly equal groups as determined by their scores on the above tests. Group A was drilled eighteen minutes four days each week for a period of three weeks in exercises calculated to remove the deficiencies indicated by the results of the diagnostic tests and theme errors. The drill methods were dictation and multiple response. Group B was drilled an equivalent amount of time on the regular ninth-grade grammar course. The time here was spent, for the most part, in writing out exercises from the text.

Following the three weeks time in which the remedial exercises were given, alternate forms of the diagnostic tests were given and more themes were written. The scores and errors were determined, and comparisons were made. In view of the results, the author of the study concludes:

> The evidence presented in this study shows that the use of a specific type of formal drill not only reduces the number of technical errors on the formal tests of a similar type but also carries over to the reduction of similar technical errors in written composition.

The present writer has surveyed the methods and results of the study and considers the above conclusion warranted. The method and care exercised in conducting the investigation were especially commendable.

These studies have been summarized to suggest how the results of the present or a similar study can be used to eliminate some of

The language errors made by pupils of the schools of Tucson. For a review of several excellent experiments of this type, some of which are referred to later in the present study, the reader may consult Lyman's "Summary of Investigations Relating to Grammar, Language, and Composition,"[6] and to the investigations conducted by Pressey.[7]

6. Lyman, R. L., Supplementary Educational Monographs, No. 36. January, 1929.
7. Pressey, S. L., "A Statistical Study of Usage and of Children's Errors in Capitalization," English Journal, 13:727-32, December, 1934., and "A Statistical Study of Children's Errors in Sentence Structure." English Journal, 14:529-35, September, 1925.

Chapter II

COLLECTING THE DATA

The Procedure

Compositions written by Spanish-American and Anglo-American ninth-grade pupils were collected through the cooperation of the teachers, the principals, and the supervisor of the junior high schools of Tucson. The papers were then divided into two groups--one group was the work of Spanish-American pupils and the other was the work of Anglo-American pupils. This division was facilitated by the writer's familiarity with Spanish and Mexican names and by a personal acquaintance with many of the pupils. All themes whose authorship was questionable were discarded. Original, uncorrected copies only were used in the study, and teachers' pencilled corrections were ignored.

Calculations were made to determine the total number of words in each group, the total number of sentences in each group, the average number of words in each sentence, the average number of sentences in each theme, and the average number of words in each theme. These data are presented in Table I, below, which has been given to simplify later calculations and to familiarize the reader with the scope of the study. It is worth note in passing that the sentences used by the Anglo-American pupils averaged a few more words in length than those used by the Spanish-American pupils. The themes, too, were twenty-nine

words longer in the first of the above mentioned groups. Whether or not these differences are significant is considered later in Chapter IV, page 50. The final total number of words in the study was 169, 604 with 481 themes written by the Spanish-American pupils and 505 by the Anglo-American pupils.

TABLE I

GENERAL INFORMATION

	Spanish-American themes	Anglo-American themes
Number of words per sentence.	14.7	18.1
Number of words per theme.	157.4	186.2
Total number of words.	75,686.0	93,918.0
Total number of themes.	481.0	505.0
Number of sentences per theme.	10.7	10.28
Total number of sentences.	5,148.0	5,191.0

Following the grouping of the themes a check list of errors was made. In order to expedite comparisons between the present study and former studies, the same error categories were used here that were used in the works of Lyman, Stormzand, Johnson, and Armstrong.[1] With the exception of Categories VI and VIII which were enlarged from three and six items to eight and twenty-two items respectively, there were no fundamental changes made. The themes were checked carefully, and the errors were tallied. The fourteen major categories of the previous studies and the enlarged seventy error items used in the present study are given in Table II, below.

To simplify the understanding of the data, each of the fourteen

1. These studies are summarized by Lyman, R. L., op. cit., p. 87 ff.

error categories has been taken up separately and the items discussed at length in Chapter III. The achievement of the Spanish-American pupils is considered in relation to the Anglo-American pupils. The results of each of these groups in turn are considered in relation to the findings of the other studies mentioned above. Before observing the results within the separate categories, however, it seems advisable to say a word with regard to determining the seriousness of specific errors.

TABLE II

CHECK LIST FOR LANGUAGE ERRORS

Categories (Roman numerals) and Error Items (Arabic numerals)

I. Case of Pronouns:
   1. Subject or object of verb in wrong case.
   2. Predicate nominative in wrong case.
   3. Object of preposition in wrong case.
   4. Use of objective for possessive with gerund.
   5. Miscellaneous.

II. Other Misuses of Pronouns:
   1. Disagreement of pronoun and antecedent.
   2. "You" used indefinitely.
   3. Miscellaneous errors.

III. Mistakes in the Use of Verbs:
   1. Disagreement of verb and subject.
   2. Change of tense in main clause.
   3. Wrong past tense, past participle, or failure to use either.
   4. Wrong verbs used.
   5. Mistakes in mood.
   6. Miscellaneous errors.

IV. Adjectives and Adverbs:
   1. Use of adjective for adverb.
   2. Use of adverb for adjective.
   3. Use of "them" for "these" and "those."
   4. Incorrect comparison of adjectives or adverbs.
   5. Misplaced adjectives or adverbs.
   6. Miscellaneous.

V. Prepositions and Conjunctions:
   1. Wrong or superfluous preposition.
   2. Pronoun with no antecedent.

TABLE II (continued)

CHECK LIST FOR LANGUAGE ERRORS

Categories (Roman numerals) and Error Items (Arabic numerals)
V. Prepositions and Conjunctions: (concluded)
3. Use of "like" for a conjunction.
4. "Where" and "how" wrongly used as conjunctions.
5. Miscellaneous.
VI. Ungrammatical Sentences:
o 1. Fragments used as sentences.
o 2. Pronoun with no antecedent.
o 3. Pronoun not near antecedent.
o 4. Change in tense.
5. Failure to make new sentence for new thought.
6. General incoherence.
7. Miscellaneous.
VII. Unclear Meaning:
1. Awkward, wordy, or complicated phrasing.
2. Ambiguity due to indefinite pronominal reference.
3. Miscellaneous failures to express clear meaning.
VIII. Punctuation:
1. Omission of one comma.
o a. Between independent clauses with a conjunction connecting.
o b. Compound predicate with "but" connecting.
o c. Coordinate elements with no conjunction.
o d. Items of a series.
o e. Introductory adverbial clause of great length.
o f. Clarity.
o g. "Yes" or "No" or an introductory word.
o h. In numbers.
o i. In friendly letters.
2. Omission of two commas. (Count each comma.)
o a. Nouns in direct address.
o b. Parts of a date or address.
o c. Expressions like, "He said."
o d. Absolute phrases.
o e. Non-restrictive word, phrase, or clause.
o f. Parenthetical expressions.
3. No period.
4. No question mark.
5. Appositives.
6. No semicolon, colon, or misuse of either.
7. No exclamation point.
8. Wrong or superfluous marks.
9. Miscellaneous.
IX. Apostrophe:
1. Wrong possessive.

TABLE II (concluded)

CHECK LIST FOR LANGUAGE ERRORS

Categories (Roman numerals) and Error Items (Arabic numerals)
IX. Apostrophe: (concluded)
2. Omission of mark.
3. "Its" and "it's" confused.
4. Miscellaneous.
X. Capitalization:
1. Failure to use capital.
2. Improper use of capital.
XI. Omission or Repetition:
1. Omission of word or phrase.
2. Repetition of word or phrase.
XII. Spelling:
1. Failure to make plural or to change form of verb by adding "s."
2. Other misspellings.
XIII. Quotation Marks:
1. Misuse or omission of marks.
XIV. Miscellaneous Errors:
1. Miscellaneous.

°. Items thus marked were added by the writer.

Determining the Seriousness of Errors

Statistical Validity: In any consideration of the seriousness of various types of errors as determined by their frequency of occurrence, it is desirable to have sampled widely enough so that the ratio of the total number of errors in any category to the total number of words from which the errors were taken remains a constant as the number of words is increased. One may go so far as to say that unless this ratio is consistently unchanging, certainty can not be had regarding the frequency of occurrence of any particular error.

An effort is made in the present study (Table IV, page 23) to establish statistical validity by totalling the errors in each of the fourteen categories for the two separate groups at 31,470 words.

Totals were computed again at 75,686 words for the Spanish-American group, and at 93,918 words for the Anglo-American group. These last two figures indicate the final totals of the completed study. Now if statistical validity were reached at 31,470 words, the ratio expressed by the total number of errors in any category computed at this figure, to the same figure (31,470) would have been equal to the ratio expressed by the final total number of errors in the same category to the final total number of words (75,686 or 93,918). This may be made clearer in an example. Glancing at Table IV, it is noted that in the Spanish-American group there were 283 punctuation errors when the totals were cast at 31,470 words. This may be expressed in the following form:

283 : 31,470 or .008992

The final total in the same category is seen to be 547 punctuation errors at 75,686 words. This may be expressed as:

547 : 75,686 or .007610

Since this last ratio is materially different from the one above, it may be safely assumed that 31,470 words were not enough to indicate more than a trend in the number of punctuation errors. Whether or not statistical validity was reached at the final totals can not be known without expanding the study.

Using the above method, the writer has found that statistical validity was not probable in any of the fourteen categories at 31,470 words. As the category totals decreased in size, the possibility of obtaining validity became more remote. Thus, one can readily

understand the chance involved in trying to calculate an absolute frequency of occurrence of errors in one of the twenty-one punctuation items listed under Category VIII (Punctuation), when the total for all the items in the category failed to yield statistically valid results.

The question of the value, then, of counting errors when they appear only sporadically suggests itself. The answer lies in the fact that the only shortcoming is that of not being able to know the exact number of times an error will appear in a given number of words. The error count is still of value in that it shows one error to be relatively more important than another.

A significant point needs here to be brought out. Several other studies have given results of error tabulations after having checked through only 50,371 words as in the Johnson study[2] and 18,223 words as in the Stormzand study.[3] The validity of the results of small studies is called into question when it is noted that misspellings (Category XII, Table III, page 13) became fewer after the check at 31,470 words. The total at this point was 570 misspelled words, while the next 44,216 words disclosed only 457 misspellings. Similar upsets were found in other categories in both groups.

Variable Factors: Variable factors were present in this study which the other studies may have been free from. These must be taken into account although it is inconceivable that a small number of

2. Johnson, R. I., "The Persistency of Error in English Composition," School Review., 25:555-80. October, 1917
3. Summarized from R. L. Lyman, op. cit., p. 89.

words, even without such factors, could give significant results. While no accurate check has been made, it was noted during tabulation that certain types of errors were prominent as subject-matter and approach varied. Theme-writers with a narrative bent were addicted to writing in paragraph and occasionally theme-long sentences which were besprinkled with "and's," "so's," and "but's." Letter-writers asked questions not followed by question marks, and indulged in such "chestnuts" as "I now take pen in hand," et cetera..., while exploiting word misspelling variations in classical phrasings like "... wouldend leve me hav it ..." Such irregular occurrence of specific errors demands a very large sampling.

The Error Quotient: A more mathematically exact way of determining the cruciality of certain errors has been hit upon. The ratio of an error to the number of opportunities for making this error, with the added consideration of the ratio between the opportunities and the total number of words from which the opportunities were taken offers at first sight a scientific approach to settling the problem of the relative seriousness of different errors. Regarding this, Lyman[4] has the following to say:

> Hereafter studies of errors must follow the "error-quotient" procedure ... if they are to be considered valid. Moreover, frequency of use in relation to the number of words must be considered as well as frequency of errors in relation to frequency of use.

Having devised the error-quotient method and seen some of its merits before discovering that Stormzand had previously used it, the

4. Lyman, R. L., op. cit., p. 132.

writer feels no hesitancy in evaluating it. To say that one error alone is as important as another--the basis of the error-quotient method--and to rate the errors equally, ignores two important facts. One is that the teaching-learning time necessary for overcoming one of the errors may be a matter of years, as for example learning to use perspicuous diction, while the time needed for overcoming the other error may involve only a few minutes, as in learning the correct spelling of a word or that abbreviations are followed by periods. The second and more important fact is that some errors disrupt the reader's thought more than others. A comma omitted between the last two members of a series is forgivable while an incoherent sentence is not. Yet both of these errors are on an equal basis when evaluated by the error-quotient method.

Besides the above deficiencies, the error quotient has limited application. One can not, for example, apply the method to Category IV, "the substitution of adjectives for adverbs," because some adjectives would never be confused with an adverb, whereas others, notably "good," will be confused quite frequently. Thus, totalling the number of adjectives to get the "opportunities" for error would be highly misleading. Categories VI, "Ungrammatical Sentences," and VII, "Unclear Meaning," would likewise fail to lend themselves to the error-quotient method. One can readily understand that trying to estimate the number of opportunities for making a sentence ungrammatical or for clouding its meaning would be an infinite if not impossible task.

The error-quotient procedure, on the other hand, has much to

recommend it. Where it can be used, it indicates how often an error is made when the chance for making it presents itself, and it suggests how extensive the chances may be for making the error. It probably may be used safely among equivalent or nearly equivalent errors, i.e., equivalent errors as determined by how much the written matter in which the error appears is disrupted, and by how much teaching-learning time is needed to overcome the error.

Concerning this problem of the seriousness of various errors, Pressey[5] has a sane word to say.

> It seems a fair contention that an error is important in proportion as it makes it difficult for the reader to obtain the writer's meaning. From this point of view many errors in capitalization and in grammar are minor: if a child writes "he don't" for "he doesn't," he may distract the reader by offending the reader's sense of proprieties, but he does not obscure meaning. Mistakes in sentence structure are, then, even more important than their frequency would indicate.

A necessary assumption appears to be that errors must be evaluated subjectively, for the most part, since the error quotient has the above mentioned limitations.

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5. Pressey, S. L., "A Statistical Study of Usage and of Children's Errors in Sentence Structure," English Journal., 14:529-535. September, 1925.

CHAPTER III

ORGANIZING AND INTERPRETING THE DATA

Near the close of the previous chapter it was mentioned in connection with the error quotient that some adjectives were never confused with adverbs while others, notably "good," were. This confusion of one part of speech with another, or of one word with another, was not limited to adjectives and adverbs alone. In the pupils' compositions, pronouns were frequently confused one with another as were prepositions and verbs. If this particular type of error limited itself to a few specific words, it seemed desirable to know what these words were. On the assumption that such might be the case, the writer recorded all instances of word confusion. The immediately following sections consider some of these specific errors together with the fourteen error categories which are discussed in serial order. A more complete list of typical examples of word confusion will be found in the Appendix.

Pronouns: Categories I and II

Mistakes in the Case of Pronouns: Table III on the following page shows the ranks of each of the fourteen categories as they were determined by the results of the four studies mentioned in Chapters I and II, and by the results of the present study. The category under discussion, "Case of Pronouns," was ranked as having the fewest errors in all the investigations except that of Stormzand. This

TABLE III

RANK OF TECHNICAL ERRORS IN NINTH GRADE WRITTEN COMPOSITION ACCORDING TO FREQUENCY IN FIVE INVESTIGATIONS[1]

Error Categories	Armstrong Kansas City, Missouri	Johnson Kansas City	Lyman four schools	Stormzand Freeport, Illinois	Mitchell Tucson, Arizona	
					Spanish-American	Anglo-American
Words	188,360	50,371	?	18,223	75,686	93,918
I. Case of pronouns.	14	14	14	12.5	14	14
II. Other errors in pronouns.	13	7	9	12.5	8	6
III. Errors in use of verbs.	4	8	8	6	5	7
IV. Adjectives and adverbs.	9	10	12	11	11	11
V. Prepositions and conjunctions.	11	11	11	10	9	10
VI. Ungrammatical sentences.	2	4	3	7	4	3
VII. Unclear meaning.	7	12	5	3	3	5
VIII. Punctuation.	3	2	1	1	2	2
IX. Apostrophe.	10	6	10	8.5	10	9
X. Capitalization.	5	5	7	5	7	4
XI. Omission or Repetition.	6	3	4	4	6	8
XII. Spelling.	1	1	2	2	1	1
XIII. Quotation marks.	12	13	13	14	12	12
XIV. Miscellaneous errors.	8	9	6	8.5	13	13

1. Rearranged from Lyman, R. L., Op. cit., Table XXVI., p. 89, and from the writer's data.

ranking of fourteenth in number of errors is due to the limited number of pronoun constructions in the category and to the fact that pupils seldom used the few constructions which might have been used. Table IV, below, substantiates this statement. In neither group were there as many as two errors per thousand words which involved the case of a pronoun. Table V on page 23 makes this evidence even more striking. No errors were recorded in items two or three from either the themes of the Spanish-American pupils or from those of the Anglo-American pupils. In the 170,000 words, no constructions using a pronoun as a predicate nominative appeared. While this infrequency of use minimizes the importance of the case of pronouns as a language-learning center, the errors, nevertheless, deserve some attention because they disrupt sentence sense.

Some of the specific instances of confusion in the use of pronouns are listed in Table VI on page 24. Arabic numerals indicate the number of times each error occurred in 75,000 words. The first column in each group contains the misused pronouns or the words confused with pronouns. Opposite these words in the second column are listed the pronouns or other words that were evidently intended and that would have been suitable in the context.

Considering these specific errors for a moment, it is seen in Table VI that the first ten items, except items one and two, were misused by both groups. The remaining items were misspellings of pronouns or uncommon instances of confusion. The second ten items were errors not common to both groups. The first eight errors and

TABLE IV

FREQUENCY OF ERRORS IN NINTH-GRADE WRITTEN COMPOSITION

Error Categories	Spanish-American				Anglo-American			
	Errors		Errors		Errors		Errors	
	at	in	at	in	at	in	at	in
Words	31,470	10,000	75,686	10,000	31,470	10,000	93,918	10,000
I. Case of pronouns.	5	1.6	9	1.95	3	.95	12	1.29
II. Other errors in pronouns.	71	22.5	151	19.9	100	31.9	240	25.51
III. Errors in use of verbs.	198	62.8	428	56.4	47	14.9	201	21.4
IV. Adjectives and adverbs.	43	13.6	71	9.4	11	3.5	58	6.17
V. Prepositions and conjunctions.	52	16.5	115	15.2	22	7	87	9.3
VI. Ungrammatical sentences.	191	60.6	513	67.8	144	45.7	461	49.1
VII. Unclear meaning.	222	70.4	517	68.4	143	45.3	386	41.9
VIII. Punctuation.	283	90	547	72.3	210	66.7	638	68
IX. Apostrophe.	49	15.6	84	15.5	69	21.9	158	17.8
X. Capitalization.	198	62.8	245	32.3	93	29.5	408	43.6
XI. Omission or repetition.	148	47.1	327	43.2	67	21.3	183	19.5
XII. Spelling.	574	182.3	1031	136.2	240	76	1186	126.3
XIII. Quotation marks.	13	4.1	39	5.2	28	8.9	56	5.96
XIV. Miscellaneous.	9	2.9	31	4.1	11	3.5	15	1.6
Totals.		652.8		547.95		377.05		435.73

the misspelling of "their" gave the most trouble. Attention is directed especially to the first three items as sources of confusion for the Spanish-American pupils. In the writer's opinion it is no mere chance that this group of pupils confused "thes," "this," and "these," whereas the Anglo-American pupils did not. While few of

TABLE V

FREQUENCY OF ERRORS IN THE USE OF PRONOUNS

Errors	Spanish-American	Anglo-American
	Errors for each 10,000 words	
Case of Pronouns: Category I.		
1. Subject or object of verb in wrong case.	.661	.426
2. Predicate nominative in wrong case.	.0	.0
3. Object of preposition in wrong case.	.0	.0
4. Use of objective for possessive with gerund.	.264	.852
5. Miscellaneous.	.264	.0
Totals.	1.95	1.29
Other Misuses of Pronouns: Category II.		
1. Disagreement of pronoun and antecedent.	2.92	4.79
2. "You" used indefinitely.	16.95	19.5
3. Miscellaneous.	.132	1.27
Totals.	19.9	25.51

the Spanish-American pupils write Spanish, most of them read it and know that the Spanish "i" is pronounced very much like the English "e." It is easy, then, to understand why these pupils used "thes" and "this" for "these," and vice versa. Such errors are more than simple misspellings and require much attention before they are eliminated.

Besides the above errors, emphasis should be strong in teaching

the difference between "their" and "there," and between "it's" and "its." Understanding the meanings and usage of these words is essential to habits of correct spelling.

TABLE VI

SPECIFIC ERRORS IN THE USE OF PRONOUNS

Spanish-American				Anglo-American	
		Mistakes			
Incorrect	Correct	in 75,000 words		Incorrect	Correct
1. thes	this	6	0		
2. These	this	5	0		
3. this	these	10	1		
4. their	there	8	5		
5. the	they	5	9		
6. there	their	3	8		
7. they	there	2	2		
8. it's, its	its, it's	8	11		
9. one	won	1	1		
10. then	them	2	2		
11. ones	once	1	1	the	that
12. which	who	1	1	her	here
13. theirs	there is	1	1	us	was
14. there	they	1	1	apiece	each
15. on	one	1	1	on	one
16. it'd	it would	1		their-	them-
17. they	then	1	1	self	selves
18. my	I	1	1	I'am	I am
19. some	a	1	1	Ive	I have
20. you	your	1	1	there	there are
Common Misspellings of Pronouns					
21. thier	their	5	1		
22. you'er	you're	2	1	your's	yours
23. an other	another	1	1	whos	whose
24. we'd	we would	1	1	whoes	whose
25. thats	that has	1	1	my self	myself
27.			1	wich	which
28.			1	a nouther	another

Regarding the other errors in Table VI, above, most of them appeared to be the fruits of carelessness since the pupils who made them often demonstrated their ability to correct the errors in the

same themes in which the errors appeared. While this study was in no way designed to measure the differential between pupils' accomplishments and their abilities, it is the writer's opinion that lack of seriousness of purpose instead of a lack of knowledge was all too frequently the cause of slovenly work. More will be said about this later in the study when factual evidence may be cited to support it.

Other Misuses of Pronouns: Table III on page 20 shows that Category II ranked in positions from sixth in the Anglo-American group of the present study to thirteenth in the Armstrong study. The reason for the comparatively low ranking in the present study may have been the unusually extensive use of item two, "'You' used indefinitely." This usage is not strictly an error, although it is awkward when repeated excessively. Concerning this it was noted that when the approach to the subject-matter of the theme was conditional, the subjects of the sentences were frequently "you." An example of this was taken from the theme of a Spanish-American pupil who wrote concerning the Grand Canyon:

> ... if you visit it you can see many things you can see Intians campted there and you can also watch them make pottery and big tortillas.

Another pupil described the game of basketball. Parentheses are his:

> You cannot carry the ball in your hand. You must dribble. (bounce) But when you lift the ball, you cannot dribble any more you must throw the ball and if you dribble twice while you have the ball it goes to the opposite side. (outside)

It may be objected that the repetition of "you" is one of the

minor faults in the above quotations and that the serious errors should be eliminated before turning attention to the less serious ones. The criticism is obviously valid. The other faults are treated later, principally in the categories on "Unclear Meaning" and "Ungrammatical Sentences."

Table V, page 24, indicates that the other serious error in the category under discussion was the disagreement of a pronoun with its antecedent. This last error ranked first in importance when the indefinite "you" was disregarded as an error, and it should be treated as such in any remedial program.

Verbs: Category III

Mistakes in the Use of Verbs: Table III, page 20, indicates that Category III ranked fifth in number of errors in the Spanish-American group and seventh in the Anglo-American group. These rankings are sufficiently close to those of the other studies that no comment need be made.

It is noted in Table VII on the following page that the inter-category rankings were much the same for both groups of the present study although with the exception of item five, the Spanish-American group made more errors per item than did the Anglo-American group. The totals at the bottom of the table indicate, in fact, that the errors made by the first mentioned group were twice those made by the latter group. A suggested conclusion is that these verb errors point to the greatest language weakness of the Spanish-American pupils. This is partially borne out by the fact that there is no

such marked difference in the numbers of errors made by the two groups in any of the other categories.

TABLE VII

FREQUENCY OF ERRORS IN THE USE OF VERBS

Errors	Spanish-American		Anglo-American		
	Per cent of total errors	Rank	Errors for each sentences	Rank	Per cent of total errors
1. Disagreement of verb and subject	15.2	3	12.5	8.55	2	21.9
2. Change of tense in main clause.	5.54	5	4.81	2.72	5	6.94
3. Wrong past tense, past participle, or failure to use either.	47.3	1	39.0	14.4	1	36.7
4. Wrong verbs used.	14.5	4	11.95	3.88	4	9.92
5. Mistakes in mood.	1.17	6	.96	1.74	6	4.48
6. Miscellaneous.	15.9	2	13.1	7.76	3	19.9
Totals.			82.32	39.05		

The largest per cent (47.3) of all verb errors made by the Spanish-American pupils was caused by the use of the wrong past tense or past participle, or by the failure to use either of them when they should have been used.

A larger part of the errors in "Miscellaneous" were caused by the failure to add the inflection "s" to the third person singular of the verbs which have it. A typical error of this kind is: "He send," instead of, "He sends."

"Using the wrong verb," error item four, is more a result of incomplete knowledge of the definitions of verbs than it is a verb construction error.

The extent of errors in all the items indicates that much attention needs to be given to the study of verbs.

In an attempt to make the data more usable, all misused verbs were recorded. These divided themselves into (1) cases of confusion, one verb with another verb or with another part of speech; (2) cases of the use of the wrong tense or where the tense was made up wrong, as "maded;" and (3) misspellings of verbs. These were too numerous

TABLE VIII

SPECIFIC ERRORS IN THE USE OF VERBS

Spanish-American		Anglo-American	
Incorrect	Correct	Incorrect	Correct
1. becames	became	dident	did not
2. teached	taught	learn	teach
3. starded	started	pownd	pound
4. maded	made	freightened	frightened
5. sticked	stuck	road	rode
6. hurted	hurt	pedaling	peddling
7. pasted	passed		
8. did earned	did earn		
9. would of	would have		
10. begouned	began		
11. had eat	had eaten		

to be listed in the text and have been included in part in the Appendix. A few of the more flagrant errors are given above in Table VIII to indicate the extent and seriousness of the Spanish-American pupils' difficulty with English verbs.

Verb mistakes made by the Anglo-American pupils were largely misspellings. This group, of course, made errors quite as grotesque as any made by the Spanish-American pupils. The difference between the groups was that the average ninth-grade Anglo-American pupil,

according to Table VII, wrote 25.5 sentences for each verb error he made while the average Spanish-American pupil wrote only 12.2 sentences for each verb error he made.

Adjectives and Adverbs: Category IV

Mistakes in the Use of Adjectives and Adverbs: Table III, page 21, shows that Category IV ranked eleventh in number of errors in the Spanish-American group. Although this category ranked in eleventh place in the Anglo-American group also, Table IX, below, shows that the Spanish-American pupils made almost twice as many errors of this type as did the pupils in the latter group.

TABLE IX

FREQUENCY OF ERRORS IN THE USE OF ADJECTIVES AND ADVERBS

Errors	Spanish-American		Anglo-American	
	Per cent	Errors in 10,000 words		Per cent
1. Use of adjective for adverb.	55	5.15	4.8	77.6
2. Use of adverb for adjective.	1.4	.13	.0	.0
3. Use of "them" for "these" and "those."	7.0	.66	.0	.0
4. Incorrect comparison of adjectives or adverbs.	9.87	.93	.21	3.45
5. Misplaced adjectives or adverbs.	14.1	1.32	.32	5.17
6. Miscellaneous errors.	12.62	1.19	.85	13.8
Totals.		9.28	5.18	

It was noted in Table VI on page 25 that "this" and "these" were prominent pronoun errors. Since these two words are even more frequently used as adjectives than as pronouns, they figured prominently in the low ranking of the present category. Besides the

confusion of "this" and "these," there were numerous other instances of confusion in all parts of speech. "Then" was regularly confused with "them" and "than," and the old "sure-surely" demon appeared frequently in the writing of both groups. Ignorance of the conjugation of verbs appeared in mistakes like "cover(ed) wagon," "streamline(d) train," "color(ed) pictures," and "old-fashion(ed) dresses." Other specific errors in the use of adjectives and adverbs may be found in the Appendix.

As compared with the frequency of the error of confusing an adjective with an adverb, the other errors scarcely deserve mention. It is noted in Table IX that this first error appeared at the rate of 5.15 times in every 10,000 words and that it accounted for fifty-five per cent of all the adjective-adverb errors in the Spanish-American group. In the other group this error appeared less frequently (4.8 times in 10,000 words), but it accounted for more than seventy-seven per cent of all the errors in the category.

The words in this error item which gave the most trouble were "good," "well," "sure," and "surely." A minor error made extensively in both groups was the indifferent use of "a" and "an." In many instances this may have been due to the lack of a careful re-reading of themes before submitting them, but it is just possible that some of the pupils did not know when usage called for the "a" and when it called for the "an." A larger part of the remedial work in this category could well be devoted to developing habits of correct usage involving these specific words.

TABLE X

FREQUENCY OF ERRORS IN THE USE OF PREPOSITIONS AND CONJUNCTIONS

Errors	Spanish-American		Anglo-American	
	Per cent	10,000 words	Per cent	
1. Wrong preposition.	78.3	11.9	3.31	35.6
2. Superfluous preposition.	neg.	neg.	4.68	50.5
3. Wrong or superfluous conjunction	1.7	2.64	.32	3.45
4. Use of "like" for a conjunction.	6.1	.93	.0	.0
5. "Where" and "how" wrongly used as conjunctions.	6.1	.93	.96	10.31
6. Miscellaneous errors.	7.83	1.2	.0	.0
Totals.		17.60	9.27	

Prepositions and Conjunctions: Category V

Mistakes in the Use of Prepositions and Conjunctions: Table III, page 21, shows general agreement among the studies concerning the ranking of Category V. The Spanish-American group made more errors that were due to the confusion of one preposition with another than errors of any other type (Table X, above). A few of these instances of confusion are listed in Table XI, below.

TABLE XI

SPECIFIC ERRORS IN THE USE OF PREPOSITIONS

Spanish-American		Mistakes in 75,000 words		Anglo-American	
Incorrect	Correct			Incorrect	Correct
1. in	on	20	2	of	off
2. on	in	13	1	of	over
3. on	at	5	1	with	by
4. on	of	4	1	of	to
5. in	at	3	1	at	in
6. with	for	1	1	to	into
7. for	in	1	1	about	in
8. from	off	1	1	on	during

It is seen from Table X that the Anglo-American pupils used a great number of superfluous prepositions. These same prepositions are idiomatic in their speech. A few examples are "painted up," "ends out," and "own up to." This type of error together with the using of wrong prepositions accounted for eighty-six per cent of all the errors made in the category by this group.

Errors in the use of conjunctions were rare in both groups. The most common were error items number five, "'Where' and 'how' wrongly used as conjunctions," in both groups and six, "Miscellaneous" which contained a few conjunction errors, in the Spanish-American group.

In remedial work for the Spanish-American group, stress should be laid on teaching correct definitions of the commonly used prepositions. The problem is difficult, of course, because quite often where definitions are strictly concerned one preposition will do quite as well as another. An example of this is: "The freighter took on a load of creosote." "In" would be quite as defensible as "on" as far as the meaning is concerned and it would be used just as often as "on" by the Spanish-American pupil.

Other common instances of confusion in the use of prepositions were numerous and have been given in the Appendix.

Ungrammatical Sentences: Category VI

Mistakes in Sentence Structure: Table III on page 20 indicates that "Ungrammatical Sentences" ranked in positions which varied from third place in frequency of error to seventh. The greatest divergence was that reported in the Stormzand study. No explanation for this

variation is readily apparent.

In the present study, this category was fourth in frequency in the Spanish-American group and third in frequency in the Anglo-American group. This low ranking is an anticipated condition in view of the ungrammatical sentences found in examples already given.

The present study used the same error items (Table XII, below)

TABLE XII

FREQUENCY OF ERRORS IN SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Errors	Pressey	Mitchell			
		Spanish-American		Anglo-American	
	Per cent	Per cent	Errors in 1,000 sentences		Per cent
1. Fragments used as sentences.	11	20	20.4	13.7	15
2. Pronoun with no antecedent.	11	5	4.66	8.5	7.52
3. Pronoun not near antecedent.	7	.5	.2	.0	.0
4. Change in tense.	7	2	1.95	1.93	2
5. Failure to make new sentence for new thought.	33	55	55.1	46.3	52
6. General incoherence.	5	17	16.1	19.5	22
7. Miscellaneous errors.	7	.1	1.16	.0	.0
Totals.			99.57	88.95	

as those used by Pressey in order to make a comparison between the two investigations possible, and to increase the number of error items. This increase made the errors in the category more specific and ungrouped. The results of the two investigations are given above in Table XII.

It is noted in the table that there was much disagreement between the studies where percentages were concerned. This may be

accounted for in two ways. One is that the investigator's judgment had to be exercised in deciding what the pupil meant to write as a criterion for evaluating what the pupil actually did write. The second reason for the disagreement may be that in the present study Category VIII, "Unclear Meaning," received errors that might just as well have been considered ungrammatical sentence structure errors. A sample reading of a few lines should make these two reasons stand out. The following extract was part of a "book review" written by a Spanish-American pupil:

> Great secrecy is necessary as his first plane was sabotaged and the pilot and instructed to go. to Bass Cave where he would met by Mechanic Sam G--- ...

The initial tendency to mark this verbal grimace a combination of failures to express clear meaning (Category VII, Item 3) is strong. Analysis shows, however, that with a few words added here and there, and with a few tenses changed, the excerpt becomes readable.

> Great secrecy (was) necessary as his first plane was sabotaged(;) (so he talked with) the pilot and instructed (him) to go to Bass Cave where he would (be) met by (the) mechanic(,) Sam G--- ...

If the investigator likes this version, the sentence errors are reduced to two in number. If, however, the investigator prefers another version, the sentence errors may be greater in number, fewer in number, or they may be some other type of error in yet another category.

Glancing at Table XII again, it is noted that the failure to make a new sentence for a new thought accounted for more than fifty per cent of all errors in both groups. The errors second in promi-

nence were "Fragments used as sentences" in the Spanish-American group and "General incoherence" in the Anglo-American group. These same two errors were reversed for third place in the two groups. The only other significant error was that of the pronoun with no antecedent.

Combining the totals of the sentence error items, it is observed that they occurred at the rate of one for each ten sentences in the Spanish-American group, and one for every eleven and three-tenths sentences in the Anglo-American group.

Though it is not the present purpose to speak of the causes of errors, there is one cause which manifests itself as responsible for more errors than any other single cause. The theme given below smacks heavily of having been written negligently.

A Narrow Escape

> Tow boys and I were comming down A mountain, in a little cart I made.
>
> There was a car a head of us and we were gaining on them. There was a nouther car comming up. We dident have eny brakes on it. we coulden't bass the car in frount of us or we would hit the car comming up. I said to the boy should we hit the care in frount or go off the side. they said go off the side. So I was driving the cart off the side when one of our wheel came of that stope us. Well we went to look where we was going to go off, we saw a big roch that we would have hit. Most likely we woud have been throwghn out of the cart. If we was throughn out we would land in some catius, and we might have been killed. We found the wheel and but it on; and rode down the hill. But we diden't tell our mother because they wouldend leve us go down the mountain.

Unclear Meaning: Category VII

Mistakes Due to Unclear Meaning: Category VII was third in

number of errors in the Spanish-American group and fifth in the other group as shown by Table III on page 20. These rankings are similar to those in the other studies with the exception of one. Johnson found errors due to unclear meaning to be twelfth in importance.

Considering the totals of Table XIII, below, it is observed that errors due to unclear meaning were almost as prominent as errors due to ungrammatical sentence structure. The Spanish-American group made one error for each ten sentences while the other group made about a fifth less, or one error for each thirteen sentences.

TABLE XIII

FREQUENCY OF ERRORS OF UNCLEAR MEANING

Errors	Spanish-American: Per cent	Spanish-American: Errors in 1,000 sentences	Anglo-American: Errors in 1,000 sentences	Anglo-American: Per cent
1. Awkward, wordy, or complicated phrasing.	40.6	40.8	30.7	40.9
2. Ambiguity due to indefinite pronominal reference.	27	27	27.6	36.8
3. Miscellaneous failures to express clear meaning.	32.4	32.4	16.7	22.3
Totals.		100.2	75.0	

In item three were included gross errors in diction. Other "Miscellaneous" errors were bits of incoherence which were not serious enough to be in item one.

It is noted in item two that both groups made an equal number of errors per sentence. "Awkward, wordy, or complicated phrasings," item one, accounted for nearly forty-one per cent of all errors due to unclear meaning in both groups.

The errors in this category were of such a nature that they struck into the foundations of language. They were frequently so complicated and so varied that they defied analysis.

Punctuation: Category VIII

Punctuation Errors: Punctuation errors are quite naturally more numerous than other types of errors, with the exception of misspellings. It is almost conceivable, however, that writing can be readable and even understandable, (witness "Ulysses" and some of the essays of Virginia Woolf) without punctuation. For this reason, one punctuation error is not necessarily as important as one error due to ungrammatical sentence structure, or one verb error. Within the category, however, it may be assumed that one error item is of similar worth with another. Table XIV on the following page is of no particular value in showing the differences in frequency of occurrence of the various punctuation errors, because several hundred thousand words of composition would probably be needed to give unchanging results. It is noted in connection with this that not more than two errors occurred as many as ten times in 10,000 words.

The "comma" sentence offered more trouble than any other error item. In determining the extent of this error, there was considerable subjectivity involved. Whether or not four independent clauses connected by conjunctions should be two compound sentences or four simple sentences had to be decided by the investigator. The writer usually marked these situations "run-on" sentences since many of the pupils who made such blunders could profitably adhere to simpler

expression. No consistent or objective way of evaluating situations such as this occurred to the writer.

TABLE XIV

FREQUENCY OF ERRORS IN PUNCTUATION

Errors	Spanish-American			Anglo-American		
	Per cent	Rank	Errors in 10,000 words	Rank	Per cent
1. Omission of one comma:						
a. Between independent clauses with a conjunction connecting.	22.8	1	16.5	1	19.6
b. Compound predicate with "but" connecting.	.0	21.5	.0	21	.2
c. Coordinate elements with no conjunction.	.73	15.5	.53	9	2.7
d. Items of a series.	4.38	7	3.16	4	8.1
e. Introductory adverbial clause of great length.	7.13	5	5.14	6	5.5
f. Clarity.	2.74	8.5	1.98	10	2.5
g. "Yes," "no," or introductory word.	1.1	13.5	.8	5	7.7
h. In numbers.	0	21.5	0	22	0
i. In friendly letters.	.18	19.5	.13	12.5	2.2
2. Omission of two commas: (Count each comma.)					
a. Nouns in direct address.	1.1	13.5	.8	17	.9
b. Parts of a date or address.	2.	11	1.5	16	1.4
c. Expressions like, "He said."	.73	15.5	.53	19	.6
d. Absolute phrases.	1.46	12	1.1	14	1.7
e. Non-restrictive word, phrase or clause.	2.74	8.5	1.98	11	2.4
f. Parenthetical expressions.	5.8	6	4.22	8	3.4
3. No period.	12.05	3	8.74	3	9.4
4. No question mark.	2.19	10	1.59	14	1.9
5. Appositives.	10.21	4	7.4	7	5.8
6. No semicolon, colon, or misuse.	.18	19.5	.13	12.5	2.2
7. No exclamation point.	.36	18	.26	20	.3
8. Wrong or superfluous marks.	21.4	2	15.4	2	18.6
9. Miscellaneous.	.54	17	.39	17	.8
Totals.			72.30	68.26	

"Superfluous marks" were second in importance. "Sporadic" is the

adjective which best describes the punctuation in many papers.

Third in importance was the lack of the period. The errors here did not come from the multiple independent clause situation like the one described above, but from lack of application of the "abbreviation" and "declarative sentence" rules.

"Items in a series" were frequently not separated by commas. This oversight accounted for more than three errors in every 10,000 written words. The lack of a comma between the last two items of a series was not recorded as an error since its use is not encouraged in the schools. Logic, of course, demands it.

The seriousness of the other errors need not be commented upon. The mistakes appeared to be widespread so that unfortunately no simplification in removing them can be had. The use of superfluous marks, the next largest source of error, can hardly be attacked until pupils know something of the use of essential marks.

Apostrophe: Category IX

Errors in the Use of the Apostrophe: The apostrophe ranked tenth and ninth respectively in the Spanish-American and Anglo-American groups. Sixty-four per cent of the errors in the first mentioned group were caused by failure to use the apostrophe. Seventy-two per cent of the errors in the second group were from this same cause. Approximately ten per cent of the errors in both groups were a result of confusing "its" and "it's." Between fifteen and twenty per cent of the errors were miscellaneous improper uses or failures to use the apostrophe. Use of the wrong possessive was a rare mistake.

In connection with the use of the apostrophe a word concerning contractions needs to be said. In the writer's opinion the extensive use of contracted words by ninth-grade pupils in their written composition should be discouraged. Contractions were used and misspelled when apparently the pupil did not know the necessary verb inflection. It may be pointed out in passing that contractions are words from which an unstressed syllable has been dropped in speaking and that they belong in spoken English. Commoner contractions like "don't" and "doesn't" are, of course, excepted.

With regard to possessives, there is still much confusion in their spellings despite recent efforts to simplify the singular possessive form. In this category as in the others there was every indication that pupils failed to use what knowledge they possessed.

Capitalization: Category X

Capitalization Errors: This category ranked fourth in number of errors in the Anglo-American group and seventh in the Spanish-American group. "Failures to use the capital letter" occurred at the rate of 11.7 times for every 10,000 written words in the last mentioned group and at the rate of 15 times for every 10,000 words in the Anglo-American group.

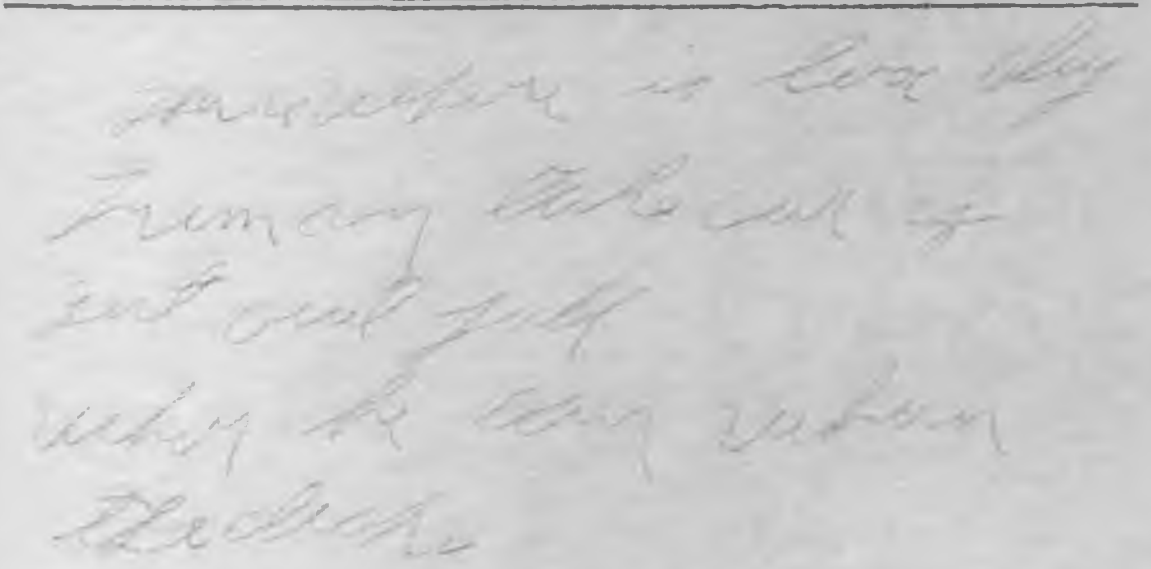
The improper use of the capital occurred at the rates of 20.5 times and 28 times for every 10,000 words in the Spanish-American and Anglo-American groups respectively. These frequencies do not appear large, but they indicate much confusion concerning the capitalization of words. It is of little value to teach pupils the rule

that proper nouns are capitalized and common nouns are not, unless they are also endlessly drilled in the identification of these nouns.

Handwriting: Handwriting was more than once the cause of improper capitalization. Pupils have formed habits in handwriting which are seldom altered after they enter the junior high schools. The indiscriminate writing of capital letters by these pupils should certainly be discouraged by the junior high school teachers.

A word may be said here about all the handwriting of the compositions instead of confining remarks to the initial letters alone. The writer found much of the penmanship to be readable only with difficulty. The example reproduced below was one which almost to the word defied the writer's efforts to decipher it.

HANDWRITING SAMPLE



The evaluation of handwriting is a difficult job and a subjective one at best. In an attempt at objectivity through quantitative treat-

ment, however, the themes were separated into five piles which represented varying grades of legibility. Themes which were extremely legible made up the first pile. Those which were extremely poor and partially illegible were placed on the fifth pile. The others were distributed among the second, third, and fourth piles. The results are not presented as scientifically founded. They are submitted, however, with the qualification that they are one person's judgment.

Most Legible	1	2	3	4	5	Least Legible
Per cent	4.1	13.6	40.8	32.3	9.2	

Anglo-American

Most Legible	1	2	3	4	5	Least Legible
Per cent	5.17	18.2	40.5	31	5.17	

Spanish-American

Figure 1. Separation of ninth-grade pupils' handwriting into five grades of legibility.

For what the conclusions are worth, they indicate that only with difficulty could a third of the compositions be read. Of this third, one-ninth of the themes in each group contained illegible words and phrases. At the other end of the scale, about 17 per cent of the themes were readily readable, 4.1 per cent being remarkable for legibility and symmetry in the Anglo-American group, and 5 plus per cent being of excellent quality in the Spanish-American group. The results are slightly more favorable for the latter group.

The writer does not feel that he was hypercritical in making the above judgments. Legibility alone was the requirement in the three poorest ranks while symmetry figured to an extent in the judgments

made in separating the two ranks at the higher end of the scale.

There can be little doubt concerning the need for the ability to write legibly. An investigation conducted by Searson[1] indicated that a consensus of 7,752 people who had no reason to be prejudiced ranked legible handwriting as the most important of language skills. Correct spelling was thought by them to be of secondary importance, while conversational ability ranked third.

Omission and Repetition, and Spelling: Categories XI and XII.

Omission and Repetition: Table III on page 20 shows that omissions and repetitions ranked of less importance in the present study than in the others. Here again subjectivity entered in placing the errors in their proper categories. Considering the sample reading of the few lines on page 34 it is noted that the words in parentheses were supplied by the writer. These omissions may have been an oversight on the pupil's part, but it is far more likely that the author of the example was not clear in his thinking or else he was simply indifferent. When parts of compounded verbs were omitted, was the error due to a lack of knowledge of verb inflections or was it simply due to carelessness?

Table XV, below, indicates that repetitions were secondary in importance to omissions in both groups of compositions. It is noted that the latter occurred at the rate of 51 for each 1,000 sentences in the Spanish-American group, and at the rate of half this or twenty -

1. Searson, J. W., "Determining a Language Program," English Journal, 13:99-114., February, 1924.

five times for each 1,000 sentences in the Anglo-American group. The Spanish-American pupils probably omitted as many words as the other group through negligence. They, however, also omitted many parts of compound verbs, prepositions, and the "that's" and "the's" which make writing smooth, and which are part of the language heritage of the Anglo-American pupils.

TABLE XV

FREQUENCY OF ERRORS DUE TO OMISSION AND REPETITION

Errors	Spanish-American		Anglo-American	
	Per cent	In 1,000 sentences		Per cent
1. Omissions.	79.5	51	25	71.7
2. Repetitions.	20.5	13	10	28.3
3. Totals.	100.0	64	35	100.0

Spelling: Misspellings ranked first in number in both groups of the present study and either first or second in the other studies. Omission of the "s" on plural words and on verb inflections was so frequent that a separate check was kept on this type of error. All misspellings occurred at the rate of one for each 74 written words in the Spanish-American group and one for each 79 words in the Anglo-American group. Failure to add the final "s" accounted for 12.0 per cent of the errors in the first mentioned group and for 5.50 per cent of the errors in the Anglo-American group. In the latter group this type of misspelling was confined to plurals while it was divided about equally between plurals and verbs in the Spanish-American group.

Much has been said about carelessness and negligence before this. In order to give a more factual basis for these remarks, and for an-

other reason to be stated later, the first and second writings of a theme are presented below. The writer submits that the errors marked

TABLE XVI

FREQUENCY OF MISSPELLINGS

Errors	Spanish-American		Anglo-American	
	In 1,000 sentences	In 10,000 words	In 10,000 words	In 1,000 sentences
1. Failure to add "s."	23	16	7	13
2. Other misspellings.	177	120	119	215
3. Totals.	200	136	126	228

by superior Arabic numbers were largely due to carelessness since in the second writing the pupil corrected them without having had specific training. This contention is further borne out by the fact that the re-writing contained other errors (marked in a like manner) which did not appear in the first theme.

THE FIRST WRITING

Books

(1)
one of my many hobbies is reading books. I like to
(2)
sit down at night and read a book
(3) (4)
My best liked books are about. Indian and trappers.
(5) (6) (7)
I an reading all the books I can about then. I an going
to make a library of that kind of books. I also like
(8)
books of cave men and early ages, and book of history.
(9)
I would like to have a lot of book like that to read. It
(10)
is very intertin to read book.
(11) (12) (13)
I an going to get all the book I can get on Indian,

(14) (15)
trapper, cave men and the other to start a book hobbie.

THE SECOND WRITING

(1)
Boooks

One of my many hobbies is reading books. I like to sit down at night and read a book. My best liked books (2) are about . Indians and troppers. I am reading all the books I can about them. ..... I also like books on (3) cave men and early ages., and books of history. I should (4) like to have a colection of these kind of books. It is (5) very intertaining to read Books.

I am going to get all the books I can get on Indians, (6) trappers, cave men and the others to start a book hobbie.

The extent of errors throughout the tabulation should exonerate the writer from any suspicion of being guilty of "quoting out of context." Table IV on page 22 indicates that the average Spanish-American theme had one error in each one and seven-tenths sentences, or about one error for each seventeen written words. The average Anglo-American theme had one error for every two and one-half sentences, or about one error for each twenty-six written words.

The other reason for giving the above themes is to suggest that the method of teaching language may be faulty. The procedure used where the above theme was concerned is this: The first writing was submitted to the teacher as a prepared assignment. Nine of the eighteen errors (fifteen only are marked) were underscored and the theme was returned to the pupil. The second theme was submitted by

the pupil as the corrected copy, and was neither checked nor returned. This procedure is common in the teaching of English composition. The results of the practice may be seen in the error categories. Lyman[2] has the following to say regarding the method just described:

> There can be no question that in the past twenty-five years, during which time the orgy of writing and correcting compositions has risen to its height, teacher responsibility for pupils' errors has taken the place of pupil responsibility.

When one adds to this the fact that the procedure is of limited value even when pupils actually do correct their errors, it is apparent that language teaching techniques may need some revision.

The purpose here is not to discuss methods except in so far as the investigation necessitates such a discussion. This extent is limited to presenting the above evidence regarding the method now used in teaching written English and to the suggestions below, and in the final chapter, which seem to the writer to be warranted.

> (1) The extent of careless errors in written composition indicates that the average pupil feels but little responsibility or inclination to limit the mistakes in his theme writing to those caused by ignorance; and (2) of secondary importance to this negative pupil attitude, but resulting from it, progress in the development of written language skills is seriously retarded.

Quotation Marks and Miscellaneous Errors: Categories XIII and XIV

These last categories were of minor importance as indicated by their rankings in Table III on page 20. Category XIV probably ranked

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2. Lyman, R. L., Op. cit., p. 215.

higher in the present study than in the other studies because the miscellaneous errors which went into it in the other studies were absorbed here in the added error items.

Quotation Marks: Quotation marks were seldom used in the compositions. When they were used, however, a greater part of the time they were used when inappropriate. All errors in quotation marks appeared only at the rate of five times in every 10,000 written words in the Spanish-American group and six times in every 10,000 written words in the Anglo-American group.

Miscellaneous Errors: These errors ranked thirteenth in both groups and were only one-third as prominent as the errors due to improper use or failure to use quotation marks. Their scarcity is of no importance except that it indicates to what extent other language errors were recorded in the other categories.

No attention has been given in the present study to paragraphing, general theme coherence, sentence sense, or theme sense.

Themes previously given as examples have illustrated one or more errors. The one submitted below is an example of excellent ninth-grade writing; indeed it is such that many an English professor would be cheered on receipt of it from a college freshman. The composition was written by a Spanish-American girl in the ninth grade. Though brief, it is by far the best of the nine hundred eighty-six used in the investigation:

What This War Means To Us

Today, as our nation is turning to the darkness of war, our country needs our help. Everyone must do more than

his part. We must give up all our luxuries for the one luxury the world has little of, freedom. We must keep our spirits high to raise the morale of our army. We must stand united and contribute all the service we can. Why should we, the American People, lose this war? We don't want someone like Hitler to rule over us. No, we want peace and freedom like we have always had; and to get this freedom, we must sacrifice our lives. For peace and freedom will rule the world some day. We can't lose because America is worth fighting for.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions: While it would be of interest and possibly of some value to compare the number of errors made by Tucson pupils with the number of errors made by other pupils elsewhere, no such quantitative comparison has been possible. Table III on page 20 indicates, however, that the relative frequencies of specific errors in written composition were the same for the Tucson pupils and for the pupils whose compositions were studied in the other investigations.

In order to make the results of the present study more comprehensible, Table IV on page 22 has been scaled down from a 10,000 word base to a 200 word base. In the present study the average theme lengths were 157 words for the Spanish-American pupils and 182 words for the Anglo-American pupils. The above figure, then represents a theme of slightly greater length than those used here. Table XVII, below, gives the number and distribution of errors that one might expect to find in the average ninth-grade Spanish-American and Anglo-American pupils' compositions of 200 words length.

It has already been noted in Table I on page 10 that the Spanish-American pupils wrote in sentences which averaged 14.7 words in length and that the Anglo-American pupils wrote in sentences which averaged 18.1 words in length. In the hypothetical 200 word themes above, then, there would be 13.6 and 11.1 sentences respectively. Reduced to the number of errors for each sentence, the Spanish-American

pupils made about eight-tenths of one error while the Anglo-American pupils made just less than one-half of one error. A truer picture is, of course, given by the ratio of the errors to the number of words instead of the ratio of the number of errors to the number of sentences.

TABLE XVII

FREQUENCY OF ERRORS IN NINTH-GRADE WRITTEN COMPOSITION

Errors	Spanish-American	Anglo-American	
	Errors for each 200 words		
1. Pronoun errors.	.44	.54	x
2. Verb errors.	1.13	.43	
3. Adjectivesand adverb errors.	.19	.12	
4. Preposition and conjunction errors.	.39	.19	
5. Sentence structure errors.	1.36	.98	
6. Unclear meaning errors.	1.37	.84	
7. Punctuation errors.	1.45	1.36	
8. Apostrophe errors.	.21	.36	x
9. Capitalization errors.	.65	.88	x
10. Omissions and repetitions.	.86	.39	
11. Misspellings.	2.72	2.53	
12. Quotation mark and Miscellaneous errors.	.19	.15	
Totals.	10.87	8.77	

The present purpose has not been primarily to make comparisons between the Spanish-American and the Anglo-American pupils. Such a comparison, however, shows where the Spanish-American pupils are most deficient in language skills.

A glance at Table XVII, above, indicates that in all but three categories (marked to the right with "x") the Anglo-American pupils made fewer errors than did the other pupils. The apparent superiority

of the Spanish-American pupils in these three categories may be explained. In the first category, "pronoun errors," it has already been noted (page 23, Table V) that the Anglo-American pupils used the indefinite "you" more times than did the other pupils. This group also used the possessive with a gerund construction often, and almost as often substituted the objective for the possessive. The Spanish-American pupils rarely used this construction and so had fewer chances to make errors in it.

Concerning the Spanish-American pupils in their superior ability to capitalize, item 9, this evidence correlates with the writer's judgment on page 42 that the handwriting of this group was superior to that of the Anglo-American pupils. A more probable explanation is that because of the indifferent use of capitals by a few Anglo-American pupils, the number of errors in the category was excessive and greater than the number made by the Spanish-American pupils.

The other item in which the Spanish-American pupils had fewer errors was the use of the apostrophe. So infrequently did the apostrophe appear in either group, however, the results should not be taken as absolute in any way. Another 100,000 words might have changed them materially.

With regard to the other items, it is noted that in every case the Anglo-American pupils made fewer errors than did the other group. These need not be discussed at length again since they have been treated in appropriate sections in Chapter III. Certain remarkable differences deserve mention, however.

The greatest difference in the number of mistakes made by the two groups was in the category of verb errors. The errors made by the Spanish-American pupils were very serious mistakes in forming inflections or in the confusion of one verb with another. Those made by the Anglo-American pupils, on the other hand, were not only numerically fewer, but they were less serious for the most part.

The preposition errors made by the Spanish-American pupils were twice those made by the other group. Here again the mistakes were more serious. This group confused one preposition with another while the Anglo-American pupils made errors which were due to the use of superfluous prepositions.

The last serious differences in number of errors occurred in the categories of unclear meaning and sentence structure. These two types of errors, together with the errors in the use of verbs, indicated the greatest weakness of the Spanish-American pupils in their writing of English.

The conclusions given above are a direct interpretation of the data. The data suggest also answers to the implied questions on page 3. The questions restated are: (1) What language deficiencies must ninth- and tenth-grade English teachers be prepared to cope with? (2) What notable deficiencies in earlier years of language education appeared? (3) Are specific methods needed for the language education of Spanish-American pupils? (4) And finally, what is the value of the present study as a diagnostic device for uncovering language deficiencies? The answers to the first and the last of

These questions are evident, for the most part, in the data themselves. As for showing notable deficiencies in earlier language education (question 2), it is apparent that a foundation in the inflectional changes of a few score common verbs would better have been given in the early elementary school than in the junior high school.[1] A glance at the state-adopted textbooks shows that "lie" and "lay," "seen" and "have seen," as examples of verbs frequently misused by ninth-grade pupils, are introduced in the primary grade. Anglo-American as well as Spanish-American pupils graduate yearly from the junior high schools without yet having acquired habitual correct usage of these verbs.

Concerning the answer to the third question (Are specific methods needed for the language education of Spanish-American pupils?), the present study has shown that these pupils have notable deficiencies which the Anglo-American pupils do not have, and that while the general language program in the junior high schools could profit by revision, it seems a necessary assumption that even more drastic changes in the teaching of Spanish-American pupils should be effected. Speculation on this point is not necessary, however, for several studies have bent their efforts towards resolving the problems connected with bilingualism.[2] Jackson has reviewed these studies extensively and finds adequate support for her statement

1. The Daily-Life Language Series by R. L. Lyman, R. I. Johnson, and F. R. Dearborn., c1934.
2. Jackson, Lucile Prim., An Analysis of the Language Difficulties of the Spanish-Speaking Children of the Bowie High School, El Paso, Texas., p. vi, 1938.

below which is a reflection of her work as head of the English department of the "largest academic senior high school in the United States serving a Spanish-speaking population . . . ."

> Through this experience, I have long since grown into the conviction that, through specially adapted corrective work based upon the identification and direct study of classroom errors in oral and written composition, it would be possible to have the Spanish-speaking children of El Paso, or of any other (city with a) similar school situation, approach graduation from high school . . . as proficient in the understanding and use of the English language as is the "average" high school graduate . . . .

Recommendations: In view of the above conclusions, the writer feels that the following recommendations are justified:

> (1) It is suggested that the written composition errors of both the Spanish-American and the Anglo-American pupils of the junior high schools of Tucson be surveyed yearly. The purpose of the survey would be threefold: First, the errors discovered would be made the basis for curricula in written composition; second, a yearly check on the improvement in language skills of individual pupils and of the school as a whole would be afforded; and third, the efficacy of various teaching methods could be determined by varying them from group to group and comparing advances made by pupils in their acquisition of language skills.
>
> (2) The extent of errors in written composition is such that it is recommended, and with emphasis, that the methods of teaching this subject be evaluated for the purpose of discovering if they might not be made more effective.

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APPENDIX

The following parallel lists are words which were confused one with another or misspelled. While the Spanish-American pupils confused more words with each other than did the Anglo-American pupils, they did not misspell words in proportionately larger numbers.

Atypical forms of misspellings have not been recorded for obvious reasons. The primary purpose of these lists is to present the most common instances of word confusion together with a few habitually misspelled words.

Spanish-American	Anglo-American
a - an	a - an
a - and	a round
a way	all most
all - old	all ready
all so	all so
along - on	all though
alright	and - an
an - and	are - our
an other	arnt - are not
and - an	at - in
as - to	at - to
at - to	
	being - been
began - begin (un) (anned)	bit - bite
bien - being	blew - blue
bit - bite	by - buy
bother - brother	
bought - brought	cach - catch
brought - bought	can - came
by - buy	cloths - clothes
	couldent
can - came	care - car
chose - choose	
come - came	dident
costumes (various misspellings)	done - did
cloth - clothes	doning - doing

Spanish-American

carried - held

do - have
doing - making
down - off
during - in

ever - every
every - very
excepts - accepts

fill - feel
fine - find
for - in
for - on
from - by
from - in
from - of
from - off

had eat
have - do

in - at
in - from
in - into
in - of
in - on
in - with
it'd - it would
Ive - I have

know - now
know - known

lay - lie
leves - leaves
less - least
life - live
loose - lose
lose - loose

mabe - maybe
maded
maine - main
make - do
men - man

Anglo-American

fines - finds
founded - found
fourty
fro - from

good - well
got - must

have - has
had of
hadent - had not
her here

in - at
in - on
in - under
in - with
in to - into
it's - its

know - now

loose - lose
learned - taught
lease - least
laying - lying

my self

of - have
of - in
of - off
of - to
on - during
on - one
one - won

pronouns - pronounce

relief - relieve
road - rode
rote - wrote

seen - seem
sense - since
sit - set
so - as

Spanish-American

most - must
most - mostly

of - for
of - off
of - to
of - with
off - out
on - along
on - at
on - for
on - in
on - one
on - own
once - ones
or - of
over - up

quite - quiet

rare - rear
runing

said - asked
seem - seen
sent - send
six - sixth
sole - sold
some - same
stay - say

than - then
that - since
thats - that is
the - them
the - there
the - they
them - than
then - the
then - than
then - them
their - there
there - their
this - these
they - there
to - on - too - two
tried - tired

Anglo-American

sure - surely

teach - learn
than - then
the - that
the - them
the - there
their - there
them - then - than
there - their
there - three - there are
this - these
they - there
throughn
to - on - too - two
tried - tired

wandered - wondered
ware - wear
weather - whether
whos - whose
wich - which
with in
woud - would
you'l - you will

Spanish-American	Anglo-American
upon - in	
use - used	
use - wear	
ware - wear	
ways - was	
were - wear	
were - where	
which - who	
with - in	
worse - worth	
wriding - riding	
wright - right	
writting	