TESOL NEWSLETTER

A Professional Organization for Those Concerned with the Teaching of English as a Second or Foreign Language and of Standard English as a Second Dialect

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CONVENTION REPORT

The 10th annual convention of TESOL held in New York City the first week in March was the largest and most successful convention in our 10 year history. It was, despite the usual convention hotel problems of space and maneuverability and service hospitality, one of the best organized, best attended, best received, and thoroughly satisfying conventions we have ever had anywhere. John Fanselow's program was not only beautiful to look at, it was easy to follow and readable—in print, format and content. The local program committee headed by Darlene Larson put the whole thing together with a thoroughness that planned for free time and had plans for free time. Her committees headed by Oscar Marchand, Mary Hines, Jeanette Marcero and Marcelle London made it a pleasant and entertaining time. It proved that good organization by people who enjoy themselves and others is what is wanted in convention organization. It also went a long way to prove that New York is truly the big apple. If anyone left the conference unsatisfied with either the content of the program or the city then it was surely due to reasons other than the job of the Convention personnel. We did run out of programs (3,000 were printed) due in part perhaps not only to the large number of participants and guests (exhibitors, speakers, and others) but to the insistance of many on "another" program to replace a lost one or one left in the room, a request not easy to turn down when you are trying to make everyone happy, you have a stack of them sitting behind you, and things are really busy. Extra program sheets were printed on Thursday (just the daily schedule of things) which were also popular because they were easy to carry around. The program, by the way, was purposely made smaller in size so that it could fit into pockets and purses. Perhaps in Miami (TESOL's 77 convention site), they

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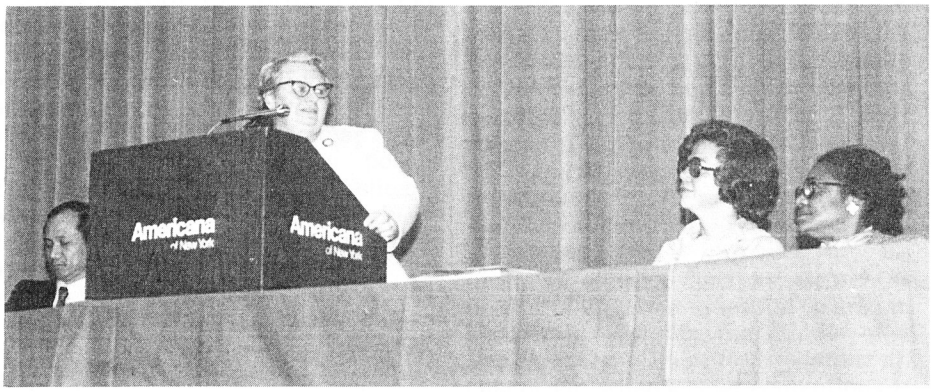

President Mary Galvan introduces her guests, Nguyen Hy Quang, of the Foreign Service Institute, Darlene Larson, the '76 Convention local chairman, and Dr. Grace Hewell, from the Office of Adult Education, HEW.

KNAPP, MORELY NEW OFFICERS

HINES, MARTINEZ ELECTED TO EXECUTIVE BOARD

TUESDAY, MARCH 2

The Executive Committee announced the results of recent elections. First Vice-President for 1976–1977 and President-elect for 1977–1978 is Donald Knapp of Temple University in Philadelphia; Second Vice-President (and Program Chairman for the 1977 Conference in Miami) is Joan Morley of the English Language Institute of the University of Michigan; Members-at-large of the Executive Committee elected to begin three year terms this year are Mary E. Hines of LaGuardia Community College, CUNY, and Adele Martinez, Director of Bilingual/Bicultural Education for the California State Board of Education.

The Committee decided to request the Chairman of the Nominating Committee to present the slate of candidates for the coming ballot to the Executive Secretary by July 15 in order that it could be published in the September Newsletter. This will give the membership time to have recourse to constitutional procedures for further input should they so desire. Penelope Larson of Alemany Adult School, San Francisco, was appointed by the Executive Committee as Chairman of the Nominating Committee for 1976–77.

The Executive Committee decided that the financial statement of the organization will be published in each year's membership directory.

It was decided to disestablish the Membership Committee since TESOL is experiencing remarkable growth and the functions of promoting membership seem to be carried on admirably by officers, affiliates, members and activities of the TESOL organizations generally.

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CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

TESOL '76 in New York City is just barely behind us, but it is already time to begin thinking of 1977. The Nominating Committee is now in the first phase of its work, searching for members who would be well-qualified for the offices of First Vice-President and Second Vice-President. This year, in order to allow time for write-in candidates, the committee plans to publish its slate in the September 1976 issue of the newsletter.

Won't you help us? Think about

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Teaching Written English Through Sector Analysis

by David E. E. Sloane and Eleanor Frörup, Medgar Evers College, CUNY

Teachers have needed for sometime a vehicle for systematic attempts at focusing student interest on sentence structure. In some places, transformational grammar has filled the vacuum in writing instruction left by the collapse of confidence in the old fashioned Reed and Kellogg sentence diagramming. Typically, teachers of English as a second language have been more pragmatic than both conventional and transformational schools, working heavily with language markers and positional relationships. Sector Analysis should prove a valuable tool in this area. Developed originally to teach English sentence structure to twelve-year-olds in Turkey, it has proved adaptable to ESL as well as to remedial language instruction in writing in the open enrollment situation; a number of instructors in C.U.N.Y. institutions have reported success with it, and controlled experiments are soon to be set in motion in Ontario and Baltimore County, Maryland. Nevertheless, with one or two major exceptions, Sector Analysis as a potential tool for teachers of "edited" American English remains a well-kept secret. Robert L. Allen, of Columbia Teachers College in New York City, developed Sector Analysis at about the same time that Kenneth Pike established Tagmemics—slot-and-filler grammar—as a system of linguistic analysis. Since the two systems are similar, this may account for the relative obscurity of Sector Analysis. With the publication of a work-text, *Working Sentences*, Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1975 (with which this article is chiefly concerned), Sector Analysis now becomes generally available for teaching written English and its popularity should increase.

Sector Analysis is called "X-Word Grammar" by many of its users because of its emphasis on the function of twenty or so modal auxiliaries which are used in the formation of question and answer patterns in English. English, and particularly written English, is approached from a linguistic perspective as a slot-and-filler or position-and-construction language. Sector Analysis is defined, therefore, as a practical linguistically-oriented grammar which describes the "edited" American English sentence as a sequence of positions (subject, predicate, adverbials, etc.) which may be filled by various construction types (noun clusters, clauses, phrases, half-sentences, etc.) One of the most useful aspects of this grammar is that the regularity with which certain constructions fill certain positions in English opens the way for pattern acquisition, drill, diagrammatic analysis, and even advanced stylistic studies through a wide range of instructional programs in language development; identification of determiners, language ties between subjects and verbs, and related pattern keys can be advantageous to both the ESL, FL, and remedial learner.

Dr. Allen's approach actually emphasizes a consciousness of language patterns that is best used as a form of editing. Traditional grammar tends to obscure the lines between spoken English and the standards of "edited" American English; Sector Analysis depends on patterns acquired through the spoken-language experience of learners, but its orientation fosters an awareness of the slightly different conventions governing *written* English. Both the "Preface" to *Working Sentences* and the accompanying teacher's guide stress the use of students' editing ability through the recognition of units of language anticipated by native speakers in expository writing (as opposed to drama or other forms of transcribed speech). Language "chunking," the ability to recognize constructions and word clusters as conveyors of meaning, is as important as individual word recognition. Consequently, students who have some vocabulary problems may still advance rapidly in the recognition of meaningful word units. One of the techniques in remedial instruction has been to offer sentences composed of nonsense words for analysis through structural markers and positions; students become remarkably adept at such drills in a few weeks and seem to expand their own use of language structures. A language instruction program based on Sector Analysis may be more concept-oriented than word-oriented, a boon to teachers who have never felt that Reed and Kellogg diagramming adequately explains such language choices as plural and singular agreement for "Half of the apples *are* . . ." but "Half of the pie *is* . . ."—a choice made relatively simple to understand through the treatment of subjects as noun clusters, language chunks, rather than as single words independently related to a verb. The checking of such patterns using X-Word Grammar "tools" represents the editing ability mentioned above.

A close examination of the work-text, *Working Sentences*, by Robert L. Allen, Rita Pompian, and Doris A. Allen, indicates a variety of uses to which the grammar can be put in helping the student to consciously identify his own grammatical patterns and employ this knowledge. The fifteen "Units" into which the book is divided focus on major areas of reference, modification, and predication. Particular attention is paid to the basic trunk pattern and its relationship to the functions of the twenty most common X-Words and to the packing process by which trunks can be expanded and given variety in writing. The yes-no question-answer pattern *(Is John here?/ John is here.)* is the basis of Sector Analysis. Twenty X-Words which begin such question patterns *(am/is/are/was/were/ /do/ does/did/ /have/has/had/ /shall/ will/could/would/should/ /may/ might/must/can)* send information merely by position. When these X-Words introduce a sentence, they indicate a question just as clearly as does the inverted question mark in written Spanish; in the middle of a sentence they identify a statement. One of Dr. Allen's chief contentions is that the ability to formulate these language patterns is rapidly acquired, and classroom experience indicates that students can use the patterns with very high success in one or two weeks of instruction. The movement of the X-Word serves to identify the subject sector (regardless of whether it is filled by a single word or *x* number of words which together function as a nominal construction) and the predicate in the basic English trunk—the first five units of the text cover this material. The linguistic ties governing subject-verb agreement in number and verb tense formation, crucial prestige features of English, are dealt with in units three and four. Unit five introduces the basic positions of the predicate and establishes the groundwork for the following eight units, which deal with various techniques for embedding information and for packing sentence trunks with additional information. In later units, the student is introduced to optional sentence sectors through a few simple terms, such as "shifter" and "insert," which identify their most obvious characteristics. Included clauses and half-sentences (one of Dr. Allen's most useful concepts for teachers working with secondary predications and substitutions of verbal phrases) are identified as important construction types. Charts covering (1) X-Word/verb combinations for verb phrases, (2) forms of irregular verbs, (3) includers—the words which signal the beginning of included clauses, or subordinate clauses in traditional

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grammar, and (4) the twenty X-Words, appear at the end of the text for student reference.

The format of the text is particularly worthy of note. *Working Sentences* employs brief sub-sections composed of explanations followed by examples. A practice exercise follows each subsection and calls for diagramming or closing to complete a structural requirement. Units are concluded by controlled tasks using the new techniques to encourage the student to manipulate sentence parts and finally generate his own sentences on a given topic. Brief concluding essay assignments call for the constructions and sentence patterns of the unit. Because of this approach, punctuation is subordinated to the developmnet of structure, and as the student masters the repertoire of sentence sectors and appropriate construction fillers, he discovers that punctuation rules are reduced to a minimum. We have felt that this subordination of marking conventions to structural logic is a major advantage of Sector Analysis.

The *Instructor's Manual* to *Working Sentences* is helpful to the teacher who has not taken formal courses in Sector Analysis. Explanatory notes take up the conventions of written English and offer more detailed explications of the theory than would have been appropriate in the worktext itself. Suggestions are given for dealing with specific student questions likely to occur as well as for the development of additional practice exercises. "A Final Word to the Instructor" makes the mind-set of the authors particularly clear—focus on the lesson and ignore peripheral areas, do not inhibit with excessive red penciling, use the book as a tool for the student to develop his own writing rather than as an end in itself.

The chief application of Sector Analysis for the purposes of this commentary are seen to lie in the area of remediation, particularly in the first semester college freshman in the CUNY open admission environment. Initial writing samples show fragments to be one of the most persistent problems in this area. Usually, the student has been told that he has a major problem, and *"fr.,"* or "fragment" is well-known to him as an identification of his error, but the student has no concept of what fragment means and no tangible way to identify or correct it. Sector Analysis offers such means: first, after working with yes-no questions to identify subjects and predicates, the student learns how to identify the omission of verbs, X-Words, or subject sectors; second, as the student goes deeper into Sector Analysis, learning to identify construction types such as clauses or half-sentences, and learning the optional sectors (e.g., front and end positions for secondary predications, which if filled are often filled with clauses), he learns why a clause punctuated as a sentence is a fragment, and moreover, how to incorporate this clause into the preceding or following sentence. Even before the student covers this step, if he applies the yes-no question strategy—and tries to turn his clause into a yes-no question—he can identify the fragment because the question sentence cannot be formed.

Editing is very important in this process; simply learning sectors and construction types may not be enough. Students often need coaxing to actually test the interchange. One successful exercise uses a student writing sample which is reasonably connected discourse with all the errors, except fragments, corrected. Students are told how many fragments appear and are asked to find them one by one, rewriting the passages and comparing the two writing samples as they proceed. Numbering the sentences in the exercise prevents the student from being overwhelmed and helps him to limit his focus; word groups punctuated as sentences can be treated one at a time. The rewriting practice is beneficial by itself, and the comparison of the two samples clearly delineates sectors and constructions, completing the lesson. This structured approach to editing prepares the student for longer assignments. Similar techniques also teach the identification and correction of run-ons, comma splices, and subject-verb ties.

Another important application of Sector Analysis is in the development of sentence variety. One of our colleagues at Hunter College, teaching bilinguals and native speakers, uses color-coded algebricks, identifying a different construction type with each color, with one color for single words; varying colors are used to build sentences. Students learn to construct sentences by visual dictation. Sophistication and clarity both increase. Even in cases of the Black English language population, analysis of constructions indicates that new areas of the sentence are used and there is an increase of correct constructions which is striking—and these changes begin taking place even before the casual reader (and sometimes casual grader) is aware of writing improvement. Still, the teacher is cautioned that practice and time are essential; they may well be lags in affective growth and we do not yet know to what extent regression occurs with this approach.

The behavioral effects of a program based on Sector Analysis are worthy of special note. Self-confidence is radically expanded through experience with the system of X-Word Grammar. In one graduate program for minorities, instructors who were educational psychologists made special note of the growth in volume of writing, increased personal self-confidence, and of some students' use of sentence diagrams in their actual log-writing. The same educational psychologists noted a second significant feature of X-Word Grammar; it allows teacher and student to focus writing instruction on the needs of the reader—his expectations for conventional sentence patterns and the inability of many readers to resolve departures from those types. Refocusing instruction toward reader needs makes the learning environment less threatening to the student.

Sector Analysis, because it offers a systematic language structure perhaps, seems to be a much freer body of material in the classroom. Dr. Allen spends time with his own students on "Boinguage," which uses the word "boing" in place of content words—nouns, verbs, and adjectives, with "boingly" in place of *-ly* adverbs. A sample sentence might be "Boing can boing the boing." With such sentences, students can be introduced rapidly to the common markers in English and be convinced of their importance; and even without technical knowledge, most readers will admit that they can identify the subject sector of such a sentence, the object (a noun cluster), and the predicate. It is even possible to demand of students: "Don't think!", thereby stressing the positions and patterns which they already recognize unconsciously if native speakers of the language. Soon students can neither be defeated by Boinguage, other nonsense sentences, or English sentences in which the vocabulary is foreign to their experience; reading and writing skills are both developed in this case. There is a distinct advantage to the teacher in separating closed lists of structure words, which can be memorized, from the unending list of content words which frequently confuse the grammar lesson.

The use of Sector Analysis in the teaching of reading is of major importance and teaching across the entire spectrum of the English curriculum may respond positively to the potential which Sector Analysis holds.