

A SURVEY OF OPINIONS ABOUT ENGLISH USAGE  
HELD BY SECONDARY LANGUAGE  
ARTS TEACHERS

By

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## PREFACE

The purpose of this study was to determine (1) the influence of certain factors concerning teaching assignment and preparation for teaching on opinions about standards for English usage, (2) the effect of context upon judgments of certain items of usage, and (3) the relationship between judgments of usage and opinions concerning standards for English usage.

I am especially grateful for the advice and encouragement given me by Dr. Loyd Douglas during the planning of this study, and for the unflagging support of Dr. D. Judson Milburn, Chairman of the Advisory Committee, throughout my period of study and research at Oklahoma State University. My appreciation is also extended to the other members of the advisory committee: Dr. Darrel Ray and Dr. John Susky.

I owe special thanks to my wife Rebecca, without whose continued aid and optimism this study would not have been completed.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Usage and the Problem of Standards

Specific problems concerning English usage have changed over the years. For example, most native speakers of English today would be amused by the following statement which appeared a half century ago in J. Leslie Hall's English Usage:

Do hens sit or set? This is a burning question in the schoolroom.<sup>1</sup>

It is doubtful that many native speakers of English today would be as concerned about this problem of usage as Hall's readers may have been, but the problem of determining standards of English usage continues. Three basic attitudes concerning authority for standards can be identified: (1) that standards should be established by the best speakers and writers, (2) that logic or a natural rhythm inherent in a language should serve as a guide for appropriate usage, and (3) that standards should vary with the occasion as well as with the purpose of the speaker or writer.

Hall pointed out that the first view is an ancient one. He quoted Horace who advocated "usus et jus et norma loquendi," which has been translated, "Fashion...sole umpire, arbitress and guide of speech."

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<sup>1</sup>J. Leslie Hall, English Usage (Chicago, 1917), p. 265.

Horace did not identify whose usage should be the norm of speech, but Quintilian later wrote that those who wish to cultivate eloquence should observe consensum eruditorum, "the consensus, agreement, of the cultivated."<sup>2</sup> The intelligent, refined, and cultivated speakers of Latin may have been easy to identify within the class structure of Roman society, but in our own culture, it is virtually impossible to draw a line separating the elite from the rest of society, most of whose members have received some formal education. An additional problem for the user of English today is to decide whether to observe the usage of the best speakers and writers of the past, as recorded in such authoritative reference works as the Oxford English Dictionary, or to imitate current usage as it is reported in such recent works as Webster's Third New International Dictionary.

Charles C. Fries, in American English Grammar, traced the idea that logic or natural rhythm should determine appropriate usage to the eighteenth-century "striving for elegance." In attacking that view he wrote that it "assumes not only that there is a correctness in the English language as absolute as that in elementary mathematics but also that the measures of this correctness are very definite rules."<sup>3</sup>

Henry W. Fowler, editor of A Dictionary of Modern English Usage, stated that for him, majority usage does not prevail. In his discussion of the split infinitive, he wrote that rules may be broken by "those who know and distinguish," i.e., by those who have an ear for "the natural rhythm" of English sentences and can distinguish between

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<sup>2</sup>Hall, pp. 11-12.

<sup>3</sup>Charles C. Fries, American English Grammar (New York, 1940), p. 2.

effective and ineffective expression.<sup>4</sup>

Continuing respect for the sort of authority Fowler represents is indicated by the popularity of Margaret Nicholson's A Dictionary of American-English Usage (1957), which was built upon Fowler's work; and the recent appearance of a revision of Fowler's work by Sir Ernest Gowers as well as Follett's Modern American Usage.<sup>5</sup>

Opposed to these views is what has been called the linguistic or scientific point of view. Fries states that linguistic science has provided techniques for determining what current usage actually is.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps the most widely acknowledged statement of this view is that of Robert C. Pooley, who defined good English as follows:

...that form of speech which is appropriate to the purpose of the speaker, true to the language as it is, and comfortable to speaker and listener. It is the product of custom, neither cramped by rule nor freed from all restraint; it is never fixed, but changes with the organic life of the language.<sup>7</sup>

Pooley's statement reappeared in The English Language Arts (1952), a publication of the National Council of Teachers of English. Also printed in that book were five statements about language derived from linguistic study:

- (1) Language changes constantly.
- (2) Change is normal.

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<sup>4</sup>Henry W. Fowler, ed., A Dictionary of Modern English Usage, 1944 ed. (London, 1926), p. 558.

<sup>5</sup>Margaret Nicholson, ed., A Dictionary of American-English Usage (New York, 1957); Henry W. Fowler, ed., A Dictionary of Modern English Usage, rev. Sir Ernest Gowers (New York, 1965); and Wilson Follett, ed., Modern American Usage, edited and completed by Jacques Barzun (New York, 1966).

<sup>6</sup>Fries, American English Grammar, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup>Robert C. Pooley, Grammar and Usage in Textbooks of English (Madison, Wisconsin, 1933), p. 155.



- (3) Spoken language is the language.
- (4) Correctness rests upon usage.
- (5) All usage is relative.<sup>8</sup>

H. A. Gleason has pointed out that such statements are acceptable to linguists, but that "many would prefer considerable rewording."<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, in this form they have exerted a great deal of influence upon teachers who consider them "principles" of linguistic science.

The linguistic point of view has also received the sanction of the College Entrance Examination Board. In Freedom and Discipline in English, teachers are told to be aware of the problem of change and to view the English language as one which allows a great variety of choices.<sup>10</sup>

Whereas dictionaries by Fowler, Nicholson, and Follett reflect conventional attitudes toward usage, several reference works have been based upon the point of view of the linguists. For example, George P. Krapp wrote that the purpose of his Comprehensive Guide to Good English (1927) is

...to encourage direct observation of the possibilities of English speech as it appears in living use, spoken and written, and to make for themselves independent and sensible judgments in the practical use of the English language.<sup>11</sup>

Bergen and Cornelia Evans state that the purpose of their Dictionary of Contemporary American Usage (1956) is to present variations possible in

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<sup>8</sup>National Council of Teachers of English, The English Language Arts (New York, 1952), p. 277.

<sup>9</sup>H. A. Gleason, Linguistics and English Grammar (New York, 1965), p. 23.

<sup>10</sup>College Entrance Examination Board, Freedom and Discipline in English (New York, 1965), pp. 32-34.

<sup>11</sup>George P. Krapp, ed., A Comprehensive Guide to Good English (Chicago, 1927), p. ix.

standard speech and allow their readers to determine for themselves "good practice" in the light of "the best answers available."<sup>12</sup>

The most notable of linguistics-oriented reference works is Margaret M. Bryant's Current American Usage.<sup>13</sup> Bryant largely ignores past authority and bases her statements upon evidence provided by more than 900 separate studies of particular usage problems.

Despite increasing availability of reference books based on linguistic principles, and despite the official stand on matters of usage taken by the National Council of Teachers of English and the College Entrance Examination Board, the linguistic view has not been generally accepted. As research cited in the following pages indicates, teachers of English in American schools either do not accept the linguistic point of view or they are unaware of it. At any rate, the problem of standards as it concerns the teacher can be fully comprehended only in terms of the controversy concerning usage which has raged throughout the past half-century in this country.

#### The Language Controversy

Some statements about usage made early in this century are surprisingly similar to those of modern linguists. For example, in Manual of Composition and Rhetoric (1907) there appear the statements that "usage governs language," and "language is constantly changing." However, the authors of that text qualify those statements with the following: "By usage, however, is meant the practice of the best writers

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<sup>12</sup>Bergen Evans and Cornelia Evans, eds., A Dictionary of Contemporary American Usage (New York, 1957, p. vii.

<sup>13</sup>Margaret M. Bryant, ed., Current American Usage (New York, 1962).

and speakers, not merely the habits of the community in which we happen to live," and, "Yet [the language] changes so gradually that it may be regarded as fixed for the lifetime of any one writer." Like the modern linguist, though, these authors warn that

Even if our words are used correctly and express our meaning with precision, they will fail of their purpose unless they are appropriate to the subject, to the occasion, and to the reader's understanding.<sup>14</sup>

George Lyman Kittredge, one of the authors of the text just cited, wrote in 1913 that, although grammar is usually logical, "the rules of grammar...do not derive their authority from logic, but from good usage, --that is, from the customs and habits followed by educated speakers and writers." But he added a few pages later, "Good style is not a necessary result of grammatical correctness, but without such correctness it is, of course, impossible."<sup>15</sup>

Much of the language controversy has centered around the writings of Sterling A. Leonard. Apparently assuming that carefully qualified statements such as those quoted above had had little influence upon the thinking of English teachers, who continued to teach by rule rather than reason, Leonard attacked in 1918 what he called "old purist junk" with arousing statements such as the following:

[The purist] looks with apparent care at a perfectly indisputable fact of English usage. It is not to his taste; it is not symmetrically formed; it is plainly hybrid. Angrily spitting, he declares there is no such beast!<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>John H. Gardiner, George L. Kittredge, and Sarah L. Arnold, Manual of Composition and Rhetoric (Boston, 1907), pp. 346-347, 363.

<sup>15</sup>George L. Kittredge and Frank E. Farley, An Advanced English Grammar (Boston, 1913), p. xv, xviii.

<sup>16</sup>Sterling A. Leonard, "Old Purist Junk," English Journal, VII (1918), 295.

Leonard demonstrated that condemnation of many expressions by various writers of textbooks on English ignored the facts of the language as they were reported in Webster's New International Dictionary, First Edition, and the New English Dictionary.

During the years immediately following Leonard's attack, several noted linguists presented views relevant to the problem of usage. In discussing "drift" in language in 1921, for example, Edward Sapir wrote

In the long run any new feature of the drift becomes part and parcel of the common, accepted speech, but for a long time it may exist as a mere tendency in the speech of a few, perhaps a despised few.<sup>17</sup>

In other words, language change is inevitable despite any objections anyone may have to it.

Otto Jespersen wrote in 1922 that contrary to widespread opinion, language change does not necessarily mean decay but may even lead to greater definiteness and convenience.<sup>18</sup>

In Language (1933), Leonard Bloomfield wrote that an unfortunate outgrowth of the medieval conception that Latin represented the logically normal form of human speech was the belief held by the eighteenth-century grammarian or lexicographer that "fortified by his powers of reasoning," he could, "ascertain the logical bases of language and prescribe how people ought to speak." Such men wrote "normative grammars in which they ignored actual usage in favor of speculative notions. Both the belief in 'authority' and some of the fanciful rules...still

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<sup>17</sup>Edward Sapir, Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech (New York, 1921), pp. 155-156.

<sup>18</sup>Otto Jespersen, Language: Its Nature, Development and Origin (London, 1922), p. 322.

prevail in our schools."<sup>19</sup>

In 1927, S. A. Leonard and H. Y. Moffett reported the results of a survey of opinions concerning usage in which 229 "cultivated" persons including members of the Modern Language Association, the English Council, and the Speech Council as well as business executives, authors, and editors, were asked to identify the level at which 102 expressions, usually condemned in English textbooks and by teachers of English, would be most generally used.<sup>20</sup> The study revealed differences of opinion among the various groups, the linguists being most liberal in their judgments and business executives and editors most conservative.

This study received little attention until it appeared in expanded form in 1932 following Leonard's death.<sup>21</sup> Although Leonard and Moffett had apparently intended to present an objective report of attitudes about usage held by various groups, the 1932 report contained a foreword by Ruth Mary Weeks which demanded that teachers revise their opinions about usage standards and quit trying to eradicate from the language of their students such well-established and sound colloquial expressions as "It is me," "Who are you looking for," "Try and get well," and "had rather." It was probably to Miss Weeks's remarks rather than to the report itself that the resulting controversy was due.

One reaction was that of Francis K. Ball who found in the Leonard study evidence that, "in the eyes of the literary world we are an

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<sup>19</sup>Leonard Bloomfield, Language (New York, 1933), pp. 6-7.

<sup>20</sup>Sterling A. Leonard and H. Y. Moffett, "Current Definition of Levels of Usage in English," English Journal, XVI (1927), 345-359.

<sup>21</sup>Sterling A. Leonard, Current English Usage (Chicago, 1932).

illiterate people, and take pride in treating English like an old pair of shoes."<sup>22</sup> Ball probably objected most to Leonard's discovery that linguists considered almost half of the expressions to be cultivated English, but he apparently overlooked the fact that Leonard had included British and Canadian authors and linguists as well as the Danish linguist, Otto Jespersen, among his judges.<sup>23</sup>

A laudatory but similarly misinformed review of the Leonard study was presented by C. H. Ward who thought that Leonard intended to show what usage was rather than what various groups of educated persons thought it was at the time. However, Ward did warn against rushing to the conclusion that "now it doesn't matter how we punctuate or what we say."<sup>24</sup>

Another sympathetic review of Leonard's findings was given by Paul M. Wheeler who happily accepted the opinions of the judges despite their limited numbers and the lack of consistency with which they responded to Leonard's items.<sup>25</sup>

W. H. Wilcox noted that Leonard did not intend to use his findings to try to establish a standard but that in her introduction, Miss Weeks implied that any standard should be corrected by means of the report.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Francis K. Ball, "A Reply to Current English Usage," Journal of Education, CXVI (1933), 337.

<sup>23</sup>See S. A. Leonard, Current English Usage, pp. 219-221, for a complete list of the judges.

<sup>24</sup>C. H. Ward, "Current English," English Journal, XXII (1933), 81.

<sup>25</sup>Paul M. Wheeler, "Current English Usage," Education, LIII (1933), 544-548.

<sup>26</sup>W. H. Wilcox, "Chaos or Cosmos in Composition Teaching," English Journal (College Ed.), XXII (1933), 817-822.

In "A Defense of the 'Left Wing'," Albert H. Marckwardt defended the Leonard study as an attempt to ascertain usage rather than to "determine or influence it in any conceivable manner," but he disagreed with Leonard's methods. He wrote that teachers must have "an adequate body of facts about the language of our own time and of our own country," and textbooks for secondary and college teachers must be firmly founded upon facts.<sup>27</sup> In "Dogmatism and the Development of Expression," Marckwardt rejected the view that rules are needed because they serve as guides to the student. He believed that students already know the broad structure of the language, and although he did not recommend ignoring all standards or conventions, he thought that teachers should know the facts of language in order to form "necessary fundamental principles of their own" and to develop a linguistic philosophy to guide them and their students.<sup>28</sup>

In 1938, apparently impatient with the hesitancy of textbook publishers to present the facts of language, Marckwardt and Walcott produced a sequel to the Leonard study in which they presented the facts of Leonard's items as they appeared in current authoritative sources such as Webster's New International Dictionary, Second Edition, the Oxford English Dictionary, Jespersen's A Modern English Grammar, George O. Curme's Syntax, J. Leslie Hall's English Usage, and Horwill's Modern American Usage.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Albert H. Marckwardt, "A Defense of the 'Left Wing'," English Journal (College Ed.), XXII (1933), 822-826.

<sup>28</sup>Albert H. Marckwardt, "Dogmatism and the Development of Expression," English Journal (College Ed.), XXII (1933), 212-217.

<sup>29</sup>Albert H. Marckwardt and Fred Walcott, Facts About Current English Usage (New York, 1938).

Most of the language controversy was confined to scholarly journals and professional publications during the first few decades of this century, but evidence of more general interest in the subject was an article by Wilson Follett in the Atlantic Monthly in which he reported "an alarming erosion of standards which English teachers are doing little about." Follett believed that liberal education had resulted in "a general decay of standards in written and spoken thought...."<sup>30</sup> His opinions were echoed by many of his readers. As a result, "The State of the Language" became a feature which appeared almost every month for the following three years, and which served as a vehicle for its author's commentary upon problems of usage.

Statements about usage continued to appear throughout the 1940's, most of them by liberal grammarians. In College English in 1940, for example, Karl Dykema attacked arbitrary judgments of correctness.<sup>31</sup> He expressed his view that correctness is largely a function of etiquette and that one must apply appropriate criteria in determining the status of a disputed construction. Follett, in the meantime, was phrasing some pointed and often humorous attacks. In January, 1940, he wrote, "...liberal grammarians now frankly argue for 'Who do you think you're talking to?' They remind me somehow of Bierce's owls,

With regard to being mated  
Asking still with aggravated  
Ungrammatical acerbity: 'To who? To who?' <sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Wilson Follett, "The State of the Language," Atlantic Monthly, CLIX (January, 1937), 56-57.

<sup>31</sup>Karl Dykema, "Criteria of Correctness," College English, I (1940), 616-623.

<sup>32</sup>Wilson Follett, "The State of the Language," Atlantic Monthly, CLXV (January, 1940), 115-116.



Dora V. Smith wrote in 1941 that "language is a social instrument, its object mainly communication and its natural setting a social situation in which many factors besides mere control over language operate to condition success or failure in expression."<sup>33</sup>

Follett might have agreed in principle with such a statement, but he had stated pointedly in February, 1940, that language "is most strengthened...by accuracy, selection, self-criticism, and self-discipline...."<sup>34</sup>

In Teaching English Usage (1946), Robert C. Pooley attempted "to describe and illustrate borderline cases [of usage items] and to present the principles governing sound judgment in such cases." He recommended "a middle ground between purism and anarchy" and stated that usage teaching would have "to turn from the indoctrination of absolute rules to the development of sensitivity to appreciation of the factors governing communication."<sup>35</sup>

The development of structural linguistics, especially with the publication of Charles C. Fries's The Structure of English (1952) gave rise to an increased number of statements supporting the liberal view. Fries wrote, "A linguist records and studies all the actual forms and uses of the language that occur;" but Fries's qualification that such objective recording should not be taken as a recommendation that Vulgar English should be substituted for Standard English, has often

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<sup>33</sup>Dora V. Smith, Evaluating Instruction in Secondary School English (Chicago, 1941), p. 10.

<sup>34</sup>Wilson Follett, "The State of the Language," Atlantic Monthly, CLXV (February, 1940), 265-266.

<sup>35</sup>Robert C. Pooley, Teaching English Usage (New York, 1946), pp. 5-6, 27.

been ignored.<sup>36</sup>

Though Fries carefully avoided stating a position on the usage controversy in that book, another structural grammarian, Paul Roberts, wrote in Understanding Grammar (1954) that "we must rid ourselves of the urge to equate English grammar with 'correct English,' and to define 'correct English' as the language which all decent, right-thinking people speak. "Correct English," he said, "is English that goes off well in the situation in which it is used."<sup>37</sup> Similarly, in his revision of Stuart Robertson's The Development of Modern English, Frederick G. Cassidy stated that "there is no such thing as absolute correctness...", and that our language "is too vast and too variable for absolute standards to apply."<sup>38</sup> Donald J. Lloyd and Harry R. Warfel, in American English in Its Cultural Setting (1956), advised that the "mainly negative" advice given by authors on usage be heeded, but that ultimately, "you will have to weigh their comments against your own sense of fitness, trusting in the end to your own ear."<sup>39</sup> In The Structure of American English, W. Nelson Francis expressed the view that, "there is no standard by which we can judge language other than an estimate of its success in accomplishing the social functions that are demanded of it."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Charles C. Fries, The Structure of English (New York, 1952).

<sup>37</sup>Paul Roberts, Understanding Grammar (New York, 1954), p. 5.

<sup>38</sup>Stuart Robertson, The Development of Modern English, 2nd ed., rev. Frederick G. Cassidy (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1954), p. 323.

<sup>39</sup>Donald J. Lloyd and Harry R. Warfel, American English in Its Cultural Setting (New York, 1956), p. 447.

<sup>40</sup>W. Nelson Francis, The Structure of American English (New York, 1958), p. 11.

Despite the influence of such authorities, there was evidence that conservative attention to rules for correct usage still predominated in English textbooks. Pooley had written in 1933 that there were "glaring discrepancies between the English we speak and the English of the textbooks."<sup>41</sup> In 1959 Jean Malmstrom reported that her survey of two thousand textbooks revealed that "textbook writers as a group approach current American usage normatively," and "their statements are based on the premise that some arbitrary standard of 'correctness' exists."<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, Eleanor F. McKey reported in the English Journal for January, 1960, that at least five of sixty items on a standard English test were graded by the authors of the test in direct contradiction to information in Webster's New International Dictionary, Second Edition, and the 1932 Leonard report. McKey acknowledged that the number of disputable items was small, but she asked why there would be any, for

As long as disputable items are included in standard tests, teachers will think they must spend time on such matters...when our students are already so confused that sixty out of ninety of them think a sheepfold is a blanket or warm coat....<sup>43</sup>

Controversy was renewed with full force in 1961 with the publication of Webster's Third New International Dictionary.<sup>44</sup> The new dictionary was developed upon linguistic principles such as those cited

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<sup>41</sup>Robert C. Pooley, "Grammar and Usage in Composition Textbooks," English Journal (College and High School Eds.), XXII (1933), 20.

<sup>42</sup>Jean Malmstrom, "Linguistic Atlas Findings versus Textbook Pronouncements on Current American Usage," English Journal, XLVIII (1959), 197.

<sup>43</sup>Eleanor F. McKey, "The Standardized Test--Are Improvements Needed?" English Journal, XLIX (1960), 37.

<sup>44</sup>A review of the Webster's Third controversy which includes statements by Philip Gove, its editor; Pei; Follett; Brooks Atkinson; and many others can be found in James Sledd and Wilma R. Ebbitt, Dictionaries and THAT Dictionary (Chicago, 1962).

above from The English Language Arts. Unlike the often poorly-informed responses to Leonard's 1932 report, opposition to Webster's Third was often formidable. Jacques Barzun, Dean of the Colleges at Columbia University, had identified the liberal trend in the use of language as "both a symptom and a cause in the present debility of intellect."<sup>45</sup> Webster's Third aroused his wrath even more, as the following statements from an article in The American Scholar indicate:

...the ways and opinions of writers have no more importance in linguistics than ideas have in Marxist materialism: both are the empty froth carried down the powerful stream of history. It follows that the English language comprises whatever is intelligible to any group that thinks it is speaking English-- Puerto Rican children in New York, native bureaucrats in India or Nigeria, Ozark mountaineers, B.B.C. announcers, judges of the United States Supreme Court, and unfortunate idiots with cleft palates.<sup>46</sup>

In his article, "Sabotage in Springfield: Webster's Third Edition," Wilson Follett prefaced a list of specific grievances with the following statement:

...it costs only minutes to find out that what will rank as the great event of American linguistic history in this decade, and perhaps in this quarter century, is in many crucial particulars a very great calamity.<sup>47</sup>

Mario Pei, Professor of Romance Philology at Columbia University, wrote in Saturday Review that the linguistic philosophy underlying Webster's Third preaches "that we must not try to correct or improve language but must leave it alone," and "that the only language activity

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<sup>45</sup>Jacques Barzun, The House of Intellect (New York, 1959), p.231.

<sup>46</sup>Jacques Barzun, "What Is a Dictionary?" American Scholar, XXXII (Spring 1963), 177.

<sup>47</sup>Wilson Follett, "Sabotage in Springfield: Webster's Third Edition," Atlantic Monthly, CCIX (1962), 73.

worthy of the name is speech on the colloquial, slangy, even illiterate plane...."<sup>48</sup>

One of the most serious blows aimed at linguistic philosophy in general and Webster's Third in particular was Dwight McDonald's "The String Untuned" in The New Yorker.<sup>49</sup> McDonald made it clear that he was aware of the purpose of the new dictionary, but he lists page after page of specific points of dissatisfaction with it. His article must be read to be appreciated.

Replies by linguists such as Karl Dykema and W. Nelson Francis were often quite as good as the attacks of their antagonists but suffered from their usual restriction to professional publications.<sup>50</sup> Dykema, for example, complained that not a single professional linguist was asked by the editors of the nation's most important magazines to write a review of Webster's Third.

The language controversy continues; almost every issue of the English Journal contains an article on it. Though much that has been written in recent years has continued to express the bitter opposition of one side or the other, occasionally there can be found a refreshing bit of satire or a demand that the issues involved be re-examined in order that the problem can be clearly defined.

In an article obviously inspired by Dwight McDonald, Ethel

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<sup>48</sup>Mario Pei, "The Dictionary as a Battlefront: English Teachers' Dilemma," Saturday Review, XLV (July 21, 1962), 45-46.

<sup>49</sup>Dwight McDonald, "The String Untuned," The New Yorker, March 10, 1962, pp. 130-134, 137-140, 143-150, 153-160.

<sup>50</sup>Karl Dykema, "Cultural Lag and Reviewers of Webster III," AAUP Bulletin, XLIX (Winter 1963), 364-369; and W. Nelson Francis, "Language and Linguistics in the English Program," College English, XXVI (1964), 13-16.

Strainchamps asked, "Who is untuning the string?" Miss Strainchamps objected to the view that "dictionaries make usage rather than vice versa." However, she listed many examples widely used in spellings and usages which have not yet appeared in such liberal documents as Webster's Third or Bryant's Current American Usage; and she seemed especially to enjoy listing "howlers," contradictions by the critics and experts themselves. Two of her examples are "thusly," and "tremulo."<sup>51</sup>

James C. Bostain's attack on traditional conceptions of correctness is rather blunt, but his prefatory quotation from Thoreau is worth noting:

Any fool can make a rule  
And every fool will mind it.<sup>52</sup>

Regardless of one's point of view, R. G. Buddenhagen's "Miss Fidditch's Epistle to the Faithful" is worth reading simply for its entertainment value. The letter is supposedly the statement of an old-fashioned teacher who insists that "the flame of grammatical purity must not be allowed to go out."<sup>53</sup>

A. M. Tibbetts has warned that we must not overlook the "real" issues underlying the language controversy. He asks, "What is language? Is it speech? What is good Usage? Who are the authorities?" Though Tibbetts definitely allied himself with the conservative view in attacking Webster's Third for its "inelegant, five-and-dime store approach

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<sup>51</sup>Ethel Strainchamps, "Who Is Untuning the String?" College English, XXVII (1966), 292-302.

<sup>52</sup>James C. Bostain, "The Dream World of English Grammar," NEA Journal, LV (September, 1966), 20.

<sup>53</sup>R. G. Buddenhagen, "Miss Fidditch's Epistle to the Faithful," English Journal, LIV (1965), 749.

to language," his demand that we recognize fundamentals is important.<sup>54</sup>

Though conservative authors insist upon standards of usage, and linguists and their followers usually acknowledge the importance of standards of some sort, few writers have discussed why they are necessary. William D. Green and Walker Gibson are exceptions to that rule. Green reminded his readers of an inescapable fact, that whatever non-standard language is, use of it does limit an individual's economic opportunities in our culture.<sup>55</sup> In discussing style, Gibson argued that the writer must be acutely aware of the times in which he writes and of distinctions important to it.<sup>56</sup> A writer's sensitive awareness of standard, colloquial, and slang distinctions as they exist for a particular time, makes it possible for him to achieve effects through skillful manipulation of varieties of language.

Raven I. McDavid has presented some of the best advice on usage matters which has been written for teachers of English. In "Each to His Own Idiom," McDavid wrote that, "in our teaching we must learn to accept, and even to enjoy, the precarious tension between the demands of system and the rights of diversity." One may reject "the conventionally established standards of verbal etiquette" if he likes, but he may in turn be rejected by members of the society which set such standards or the employer who demands conformity to them. McDavid listed four principles for schools to follow: First, prescriptions for any

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<sup>54</sup>A. M. Tibbetts, "Real Issues in the Great Language Controversy," English Journal, LV (1966), 28,36.

<sup>55</sup>William D. Green, "Language and the Culturally Different," English Journal, LIV (1965), 724.

<sup>56</sup>Walker Gibson, "A Note on Style and the Limits of Language," The Limits of Language, ed. Walker Gibson (New York, 1962), pp. 110-111.

form of linguistic behavior must be derived from the best that is known, "from serious observations of the facts, not from aesthetics or logic or personal preferences." Second, all variants of good repute should be accepted. Third, we must educate the community to our purposes in language teaching, "especially those who set the tone of public opinion." Fourth, we must realize that "effective use of language is less a matter of conformity to a set of specific practices than facility, fluency and versatility in using whatever variety of the language one commands."<sup>57</sup>

#### Purpose of the Study

It is important that the attitudes of English teachers concerning standards of usage be clearly defined, for their attitudes determine to some extent their assessment of their students' mastery of skills in speech and writing. The purpose of this study is to determine as accurately as possible the attitudes about English usage held by teachers of secondary language arts in Oklahoma. It is a purpose which cannot be achieved so easily as one might imagine. For it is this author's opinion that the point of view about usage which any teacher expresses may have little bearing upon how she deals with particular problems of English usage which occur in the speech and writing of her students. Consequently, the research project described in this study has two major functions: (1) to discover whether or not a correlation exists between opinions about usage and judgments of the appropriate level of usage of particular expressions, and (2) to determine whether or not teachers will change their judgments about certain expressions when those expressions appear in different contexts, some more formal than

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<sup>57</sup>Raven I. McDavid, "Each in His Own Idiom," Indiana English Journal, I (Early Winter, 1967), 6.



others.

Teachers of English in Oklahoma have proven themselves willing to improve their methods of instruction. Success of Oklahoma State University's summer workshops in English and extension programs in improvements in language arts instruction give ample evidence to support such a claim. The author of this study hopes that it may prove useful in such programs in that its results will contribute to teachers' awareness of the relationships between their opinions and practices where matters of usage are concerned, and that in contributing to their own self-knowledge, it will reinforce their willingness to search for and adopt methods of instruction and approaches to teaching consistent with their obvious concern for improvement.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

#### Surveys of Errors

Early research in the area of language usage was concerned primarily with the tabulation and classification of errors. Literally dozens of such studies were made, often by public school administrators rather than experts on language or language teaching.

An early survey of errors, and one which conforms to the pattern often followed in error counts, was reported by Charles S. Meek in 1910.<sup>58</sup> Under Meek's direction, teachers in Boise, Idaho, listed the speech error of 3,500 children enrolled in the first eight grades of school. The teachers were asked to tabulate verb errors, double negatives, mispronunciations, misuse of pronouns, errors in the use of adverbs, and colloquialisms. They discovered that over forty percent were errors in the use of verbs, and almost half of the verb errors were confusions of past and perfect participle forms.

Annette Betz and Esther Marshall in 1917 reported the results of W. W. Charters's investigation of errors in the spontaneously written work of Kansas City school children in grades four through eight.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Charles S. Meek, "English in the Elementary Schools," Addresses and Proceedings of the National Education Association, XLVIII (1910), 434-436.

<sup>59</sup>Annette Betz and Esther Marshall, "Grammar Based on Errors," English Journal, V (1916), 491-500.

The relative frequencies of errors in punctuation, language, and grammar from a total of 5,883 errors were reported; but since only 112 papers were analyzed, the data could not be considered reliable.

In 1923, Charters reported fourteen investigations of errors in both speech and writing of public school students.<sup>60</sup> All except one of these studies produced findings similar to those of Meek, that verb errors were predominant.

In 1929, R. L. Lyman summarized sixty studies relevant to the problem of English usage.<sup>61</sup> Lyman believed that error counts should be considered no more than the raw materials with which curriculum-makers have to work; he warned that a weakness in such studies was that of determining what language errors really are, a problem which S. A. Leonard had begun to investigate in 1927.

An interesting variation on error surveys was reported by Edward Engleman and J. R. Shannon in 1933.<sup>62</sup> After analyzing teachers' letters and reports of teachers' conferences, these authors took teachers to task for misuse of their own subject, for they were committing the same usage offenses they expected their students to avoid.

Despite Lyman's warning that criteria for the identification of errors lacked objectivity, interest in error surveys continued. The largest study was a five year, nationwide survey of the errors in speech

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<sup>60</sup>W. W. Charters, Curriculum Construction (New York, 1923), pp.194-211.

<sup>61</sup>R. L. Lyman, Summary of Investigations Relating to Grammar, Language, and Composition, Supplementary Educational Monographs, XXXVI (Chicago, 1929).

<sup>62</sup>Edward Engleman and J. R. Shannon, "An Analysis of English Teachers' English Errors," English Journal (College Ed.), XXII (1933), 45-52.

and writing of 1,500,000 pupils in all states and territories, recorded by 40,000 teachers and reported by L. J. O'Rourke in 1933.<sup>63</sup> In addition to the usual identification and tabulation of frequencies, teachers who participated in this study classified errors according to "phases of usage": essential principles, niceties, and phases of minimum importance.

A more ambitious study than those previously cited was reported by Walter D. Loban in 1963. Teachers in Oakland, California, measured the language ability of 338 elementary school children through use of a standardized test and collected data concerning vocabulary, use of oral and written language, proficiency in reading and listening, teachers' judgments of students' skill in language, and information about students' health and homes. Deviations from standard usage were identified according to the research of S. A. Leonard, C. C. Fries, Marckwardt and Walcott, and the recommendations made by Robert C. Pooley in Teaching English Usage. Loban reached the following conclusions about his findings:

Subjects who are rated as most proficient in language are also those who manifest the most sensitivity to the conventions of language. The subject who, despite unconventional usage, exhibits verbal linguistic skill is the exception.<sup>64</sup>

Quite clearly, most of these studies are concerned with effects rather than causes. The following section is concerned with studies which attempt to explain what factors influence an individual's expression.

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<sup>63</sup>L. J. O'Rourke, Rebuilding the English-Usage Curriculum to Insure Greater Mastery of Essentials (Washington, D.C., 1934).

<sup>64</sup>Walter D. Loban, The Language of Elementary School Children (Champaign, Illinois, 1963), p. 85.

## Usage and Related Factors

Other studies have shown the relationship between usage and various factors. For example, in 1941 Leland P. Bradford analyzed the importance of the following eight factors to the English usage of 854 teachers in WPA programs in Illinois: extent of formal education, age, previous major occupation, years spent in former occupation, race, size of community in which the major portion of childhood was spent, and foreign or native birth of parents.<sup>65</sup> The study indicated that many factors affect the usage of individuals, any factor has little weight in isolation, and education has little effect on the usage of adults.

In 1953, Doris I. Noel reported relationships between children's usage and (1) parents' usage in the presence of the child, (2) fathers' occupations, and (3) frequency of parents' oral expression. Pupils from 107 families were given a test on usage, and a questionnaire on types of oral language situations was completed in visits to the homes. Noel found that children "tend to use the same quality of English as what they hear their parents use." She concluded that teachers can help to eliminate errors through practice, that parents' cooperation is necessary if a program for improving usage is to be effective, that the father's occupation is not significant when intelligence is held constant, and that a child's use of the language improves in direct proportion to the greater amount of oral expression his parents use in his presence.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Leland P. Bradford, "A Study of Certain Factors Affecting English Usage," Journal of Educational Research XXXV (1941), 109-118.

<sup>66</sup>Doris I. Noel, "A Comparative Study of the Relationship Between the Quality of the Child's Language Usage and the Quantity and Types of Language Used in the Home," Journal of Educational Research, XVIII (1953), 161-167.

## Studies of Opinions About Usage

More directly concerned with the present study are several projects related to opinions about English usage. The 1927 Leonard and Moffett classification of items of usage by members of several groups of "cultivated" persons has already been discussed [see page 8]. Later, as reported in Current English Usage (1932), Leonard expanded his list of items to two hundred thirty and asked 229 judges composed of thirty linguistic specialists, thirty editors, twenty-two authors, nineteen business men, and 128 teachers of English and of speech to rank each item as "formally correct," "fully acceptable English for informal conversation," or "popular or illiterate speech." He also included in the 1932 study a survey of opinions about punctuation, which is not relevant to the present report. Leonard tabulated the responses of all judges and discussed in detail the responses of the linguists. He found that many expressions "which are condemned by most handbooks and which are listed among improper usages in the chapters on diction in many school rhetorics" are actually in frequent use by educated speakers.<sup>67</sup>

Albert H. Marckwardt and Fred Walcott followed Leonard's study with a review of the "facts" about each item as they were recorded in the Oxford English Dictionary; Webster's New International Dictionary, Second Edition; Horwill's Modern American Usage; Curme's Syntax; and J. Leslie Hall's English Usage. It was the intention of these authors to let facts speak for themselves; and, surprisingly, they discovered "an extreme conservatism about usage" even among the most liberal of Leonard's groups of judges.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>Leonard, Current English Usage, pp. 66, 190.

<sup>68</sup>Marckwardt and Walcott, Facts About Current English Usage.

Like Leonard, Charles C. Fries wished to determine present usage, but he ignored the opinions of judges and used as his source of information files of informal correspondence in the possession of the United States Government.<sup>69</sup> He reported differences in the language used by members of three groups of native speakers: (1) college graduates of recognized standing in their communities, (2) individuals who had completed from one year of high school to one year of college or technical school training and whose occupations were neither professional nor unskilled, and (3) manual and unskilled laborers who had not received formal schooling beyond the eighth grade. Like Leonard, Fries discovered many instances of the use by educated persons of expressions condemned in textbooks and handbooks of English.

H. O. Nordberg rejected the use of an "arbitrarily selected jury of opinion" such as that used by Leonard, but attempted instead "to determine the existing convictions of [student teachers] regarding the teaching of grammar and usage at the secondary level." He presented an inventory of items concerned with utility of formal grammar, grammar and sentence structure, teaching English usage, and grammatical concepts to 142 student teachers in five colleges and universities. The subjects were asked to check an item such as the following either true or false or unknown: "An error in verb form is best corrected by teaching the principle parts of the verb in question." Nordberg discovered "a dubious awareness of the implications of research" and very definite "gaps" in the knowledge of student teachers.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>Fries, American English Grammar.

<sup>70</sup>H. Orville Nordberg, "Neophytes and the Teaching of Grammar and Usage," Journal of Educational Research, XLIV (1951), 535-541.

More closely related to the present study than any of those previously cited was Thurston Womack's survey of attitudes about usage held by members of the National Council of Teachers of English.<sup>71</sup> Of the 900 individuals who were sent questionnaires, 339 reported their judgments about fifty disputable items of usage. Womack measured the relationships between judgments about the items and five factors: teaching assignment, size of community in which the school was located, professional experience, academic training, and familiarity with important publication in language study. He discovered that the most conventional attitudes were held by high school teachers with more than ten years of experience, living in small towns and holding either an AB or MA degree.

Paul Stoakes reported that a survey of 447 Florida teachers confirmed Womack's findings. Stoakes found a wide range of differences in responses to specific items of usage, and he noted that "when teachers reject items of usage, they are more apt to depart from the findings of scholarly usage studies than when they accept them."<sup>72</sup>

Whereas Womack asked teachers to indicate their responses to each item on a scale of usage levels, Patrick J. Groff asked a group of secondary school teachers of English in California to rank eight comments upon usage in the order of their acceptance of the statements. The statements were long, actually short paragraphs, and they varied from liberal to conservative opinions about how usage standards and levels should be taught, whether change should be permitted, and whether

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<sup>71</sup>Thurston Womack, "Teachers' Attitudes Toward Current Usage," English Journal, XLVIII (1959), 186-190.

<sup>72</sup>Paul Stoakes, "The Vexed Problem of English Usage," Word Study, XLII (March 1967), 2.



written language should take precedence over speech in the English classroom. Of the 433 teachers included in the study, 256 responded to Groff's request. He discovered not only a wide difference of opinion about what the basis should be for determining standards of usage but an inconsistency in the rankings made by individual teachers. He concluded that these factors could contribute to the alleged poor quality of English teaching in today's schools.<sup>73</sup>

Robert C. Pooley reported in the English Journal for May, 1967, the responses of 1000 Wisconsin junior and senior high school English teachers to eleven items such as the following: "can't hardly," "who did you ask," and "that's me." The teachers were asked to indicate whether each item was "acceptable anywhere," "acceptable in informal speaking and writing," "tolerated but not approved," or "not acceptable." Pooley found that there was no agreement about English usage among these teachers. Concerning particular items, he discovered (1) that these teachers did not accept the split infinitive, (2) that they rated "can't hardly" as "not acceptable" most often but tend to use it in their own speech, (3) that "one of those statesmen who is" received the largest number of ratings as "acceptable anywhere" even though it is the only one of the items that can be questioned on logical grounds, and (4) that most teachers rated low the reflexive pronoun as a substitute for the objective personal pronoun even though it is in almost universal use. Pooley concluded that English usage is still in a state of chaos.<sup>74</sup>

Most of these studies reveal that conservative attitudes, uncer-

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<sup>73</sup>Patrick J. Groff, "Teacher Rankings of Bases for Usage Standards," High School Journal, XLVI (December, 1962), 83-86.

<sup>74</sup>Robert C. Pooley, "Teaching Usage Today and Tomorrow," English Journal, LVI (1967), 742-746.

tainty, and disagreement about usage prevail among teachers of English in the United States.

#### Statement of the Problem

The research project described in this study goes beyond previous studies in two ways. In addition to judgments about specific usage items, teachers were asked to react to conservative and liberal statements about usage standards. Their responses to both kinds of items were compared in an attempt to discover whether or not their opinions are consistently reflected in judgments about particular expressions. Also, the study was designed to determine whether or not the context in which an item appears influences judgment about it.

The basic problem with which this study is concerned is the difficulty of making an accurate assessment of teachers' opinions about usage standards. For example, their opinions may or may not serve as an index to their judgments of particular expressions in English. Earlier studies have approached the problem of determining attitudes about usage in two ways: (1) Attempts have been made to measure the liberality or conservatism of teachers' attitudes by considering their rankings of certain expressions as formal written English, colloquial English, substandard English, etc., or (2) their acceptance or rejection of certain statements about standards of usage has been considered a measure of their attitudes.

It is this author's opinion that one such approach cannot reasonably be taken without attention to the other. In all probability, rankings of particular debatable problems of usage such as "due to" or "neither are" give a relatively accurate measure of the liberality or

conservativeness of teachers' attitudes in such matters. However, if attitudes measured in this way differ from opinions as indicated by acceptance or rejection of certain statements about usage standards, then the reason for much of the uncertainty and disagreement reported in earlier studies becomes obvious.

Most teachers do wish to improve their methods of instruction. In order to do so, they must be aware of such a lack of correlation between expressed opinions and attitudes about usage problems if it exists. In addition, if their rankings of particular items vary as a result of change in context; i.e., if "neither are" or "I read where" are considered appropriate in colloquial English when they appear in one context but formal written English when they appear in another, then teachers must be made aware of the tendency to make such shifts in order that they may maintain flexibility in their judgments of students' oral and written expression as well as in their choice of authorities in dictionaries and handbooks to support their decisions concerning appropriate diction for different purposes and in different contexts.

### CHAPTER III

#### METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

##### The Instrument

The questionnaire, constructed by the author and titled "Opinions Concerning English Usage," contains three parts.<sup>75</sup> Part A is a request for information about preparation for teaching, teaching assignment, size of the community in which the teacher is employed, and professional experience. This information was requested in order that significant external influences upon teachers' judgments could be discovered and in order that the influence of such factors upon the judgments of Oklahoma language arts teachers could be compared with results of similar studies in other states and throughout the United States. Such information could be essential in the planning of in-service training for teachers.

Part B contains fifteen expressions listed as disputable in the 1932 Leonard report. Each item appears in two different contexts, one intended to be more formal than the other. Two forms of Part B were mailed, each to half of the group being studied. In one form the expressions were underlined; in the other form they were not underlined. Two forms were sent in order to serve as a check upon the significance of any shift in ranking of items in different contexts. On the unmarked form, the subjects might have responded to the entire sentence

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<sup>75</sup>Appendix A contains a copy of the instrument.

but overlooked a particular expression in it. However, a statistically significant difference between responses to the same item in different contexts, when the particular items were clearly marked and the subjects could check the consistency of their responses, would indicate a definite influence of the context upon the item.

Part C contains twenty statements either directly or indirectly concerned with standards of English usage. Ten of the statements were derived from the writings of persons who support the linguistic point of view about English usage, and ten were based upon statements by individuals who held traditional views on the subject.

Design of the instrument was based upon suggestions for questionnaire construction and attitude measurement appearing in works by Mildred Parten, Carter V. Good, and Fred N. Kerlinger.<sup>76</sup> Some revisions of a preliminary form of the questionnaire were based upon results of a pilot study in which the instrument was administered to thirty students in secondary language arts methods at Oklahoma State University.

In order to improve the instrument further, inquiries accompanying it were sent to selected linguists. Those who answered included Albert H. Marckwardt, Professor of English at Princeton University and president of the National Council of Teachers of English; W. Nelson Francis, Professor of English and Linguistics at Brown University; and Robert C. Pooley, Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin and past president of the National Council of Teachers of English. In addition to practical suggestions of a general nature, Professor Marckwardt gave a

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<sup>76</sup>Mildred Parten, Surveys, Polls and Samples: Practical Procedures (New York, 1950); Carter V. Good, Essentials of Educational Research (New York, 1966); and Fred N. Kerlinger, Foundations of Behavioral Research (New York, 1964).

detailed analysis of five items, which were revised or discarded. His comments on those particular items were useful in the revision of others. Professors Francis and Pooley contributed useful changes in wording for several items and noted apparent ambiguities in several others.

### Research Variables

The variables examined in this study were attitudes of secondary language arts teachers about English usage. Part C of the instrument attempts to measure opinions, i.e., conscious expression of attitudes, whereas part B attempts to measure directly the effect of attitudes about usage on particular expressions. Since the results of this study could have practical application to the planning of postgraduate training programs in language arts teaching methods, the author included in Part A a request for information about preparation for teaching and teaching assignment, factors whose influence should be considered in the planning of any program to be taught in communities of varying sizes or to teachers with different backgrounds in teacher training and experience.

### Definition of Terms

Several terms are used frequently in the study, and their definitions as they are used here, are essential to an understanding of it.

Liberal is defined for the purposes of this study as describing opinions about usage based upon the beliefs that standards of correctness should vary with the occasion and the intention of the speaker or writer, and that standards of usage should be based upon general usage exclusive of the language habits of relatively uneducated users of English.

Conservative is defined as describing the opinion that standards of

usage should be based upon the usage of the best writers of the past or upon a logic or rhythm generally evident in the structure of the English language.

Levels of Usage are defined as areas of language usage in which certain forms of expression are appropriate. It is assumed here that an educated user of English will intentionally vary his speech and writing from highly formalized written English to the light tone of conversation. Specific levels of usage are overlapping and to some extent must be arbitrarily defined for convenience in discussion. Functional definitions for levels used in rating items of usage appear in the directions for Part B of the questionnaire.

Uncultivated or illiterate is defined as the language of speakers who have not received formal schooling beyond the eighth grade and whose experiences have generally limited them to social interaction with other relatively uneducated persons.

#### Group Studied

The group studied was made up of secondary language arts teachers who held active membership in the Oklahoma Council of Teachers of English at the time of the study.

Of the original 597 persons, eight had moved and left no forwarding address, two entries were duplicates, and thirteen persons were retired and no longer wished to be considered active members of the profession. A complete survey was mailed on September 28, 1967, followed by complete remailing of the instrument in follow-up studies sent November 18, 1967, and January 5, 1968. Of the 574 members included in the survey, 346, i.e., sixty percent, returned completed questionnaires.

Since the findings of this study could be useful in the planning of in-service and post graduate training of various types in language arts instruction for teachers of English, it was felt that this group would be especially appropriate for study. Choice of the group was determined by the professional interest such persons have concerning language usage as well as their influence upon the majority of public school students--an influence which can be considered greater than that of any other group besides the families and immediate associates of their students.

The Oklahoma Council is an especially appropriate group for a study of this nature because of the vitality its members have shown in their active efforts to bring innovations and improvements in language arts instruction into the classrooms of the state. Not the least of their accomplishments has been their recent revision of the Teaching Guide for the Language Arts prepared by the Oklahoma Council of Teachers of English with the cooperation of Oklahoma State University and under the authority of the Oklahoma Curriculum Improvement Commission. This Guide, like its predecessor, was designed "to promote orderly change in the language arts curriculums in the schools of Oklahoma."<sup>77</sup> Its philosophy and guiding principles were developed from the clear thinking of its planners and based upon the most promising of recent recommendations for improvement of English instruction and classroom methods.

#### Analytic Procedure

It should be noted that directions to Part B of the questionnaire refer to varieties or levels of usage. For the purposes of this study,

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<sup>77</sup>Oklahoma Council of Teachers of English, Revised Teaching Guide for the Language Arts (Oklahoma City, 1963), p. ix.



the five rankings are analyzed as levels on a descending scale from five to one, as indicated in the instrument. In 1948, John S. Kenyon wrote in the English Journal that the term "levels" suggests better or worse, or more or less desirable.<sup>78</sup> He suggested that a distinction be made between substandard level, which includes illiterate speech and ungrammatical writing, and standard level, the language used generally by the cultivated. He further suggested that types of language used for various purposes within these levels be called functional varieties.

Kenyon's distinctions are useful; however, there is evidence to suggest that they are not generally accepted by teachers of English. For example, Lorraine Sundal described "a positive approach to usage study" in the English Journal in 1958, in which she used the terms "formal," "informal," and "substandard" to refer to three basic levels of usage.<sup>79</sup>

Kenyon's distinctions may have acquired wider acceptance since the appearance of his article in Harold B. Allen's Applied English Linguistics (1958).<sup>80</sup> However, Sidney Shanker, "a secondary school teacher writing for secondary school teachers" about semantics, rhetoric, and other language matters in 1965, followed Sundal in identifying as levels of usage formal language, informal language, and a group including substandard usage, slang, provincialisms, and jargon.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>John S. Kenyon, "Cultural Levels and Functional Varieties of English," College English, X (1948), 31-36.

<sup>79</sup>Lorraine Sundal, "A Transition Program in Grammar and Usage," English Journal, XLV (1956), 195-200.

<sup>80</sup>Harold B. Allen, ed., Readings in Applied English Linguistics, 1964 ed. (New York, 1958), pp. 294-301.

<sup>81</sup>Sidney Shanker, Semantics: The Magic of Words (Boston, 1965), pp. 18-19.

In view of the statements about usage levels by two teachers, and in view of the conservatism among secondary teachers of English indicated in the research cited above, the author of this study felt justified in asking the subjects to rank each item as directed and in treating the ranks for purposes of analysis as measures of a continuous variable on an ordinal scale.

The magnitude of the group studied permits assumptions of a normal distribution of responses; however, the impossibility of treating the data in terms of interval scale measurement dictates use of nonparametric measures for statistical analysis. Each group, those with marked items and those with unmarked items on Part B of the instrument, were analyzed separately according to the following measures. Discussion of the statistics used may be found in Nonparametric Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences (1956) by Sidney Siegel.<sup>82</sup>

A chi-square analysis was used to determine the relationship between the ten items listed in Part A and opinions about usage as measured by Part C of the questionnaire. The formula

$$\chi^2 = \frac{N(|AD - BC| - \frac{N}{2})^2}{(A+B)(C+D)(A+C)(B+D)}$$

was applied to data in which both rows and columns equaled two. The

formula  $\chi^2 = \sum_{i=1}^r \sum_{j=1}^k \frac{(O_{ij} - E_{ij})^2}{E_{ij}}$  was applied when the sum of rows and columns was greater than four.

The Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed Ranks test was used to determine whether or not a significant difference existed between responses to

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<sup>82</sup>Sidney Siegel, Nonparametric Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences (New York, 1956).

items of usage in different contexts as indicated by responses to Part B.

The formula for this test is

$$z = \frac{T - \frac{N(N+1)}{4}}{\sqrt{\frac{N(N+1)(2N+1)}{24}}}$$

The Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient was used to determine whether or not a significant relationship existed between responses to Parts B and C. This correlation is measured through use of the following formula:

$$r_s = 1 - \frac{6 \sum_{i=1}^N d_i^2}{N^3 - N}$$

Part B was scored for each subject by taking the sum of numbers assigned to the ranks checked. In final tabulation, both formal written and formal spoken rankings were given a score of 5. Informal written or spoken rankings received scores of 3. Expressions ranked illiterate or uncultivated were assigned a score of 1.

Part C was scored by totaling numbers assigned to each rank in the following manner: Liberal statements were assigned values from 5 to 1 corresponding to the range of possible responses from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Conservative statements were given values from 1 to 5. Thus a high score on either Part B or Part C indicated liberality of responses; a low score indicated conservatism as defined for the purposes of this study.

#### Limitations

Interpretations of the results of this study or application of its findings should be made with full awareness of its limitations. They are as follows:

1. The study was limited to secondary language arts teachers, and

their responses may not represent attitudes held by teachers on other levels or in other regions.

2. Validity of the data is determined in part by the accuracy with which the instrument measures what it is intended to measure.
3. The fifteen items of usage selected for inclusion in Part B do not represent all important areas of English expression, but these are expressions often found in handbook discussions of English usage. These fifteen items were selected from an original list of fifty which were among expressions identified as disputable in the Leonard study of 1932 [see page 8]. All fifteen items have been identified as "standard" English by authorities such as Margaret M. Bryant in Current American Usage, but they were chosen because of the range of responses to each one made on the pilot study referred to at the beginning of this chapter--a range in ranking which indicates that for the purposes of a study such as this they still may be considered disputable.
4. The questionnaire was designed to measure opinions about usage. Responses may not be considered factual. As the review of the literature given in Chapter II indicates, all too often such responses based on opinion have been misinterpreted as authority for "correct" English.

#### Significance of the Study

The study described in this report is significant in that, unlike earlier surveys of attitudes concerning English usage, it measures

significance of relationships which exist between teachers' responses to statements expressing attitudes about usage and their personal judgment of the appropriateness of certain items. This study does reveal the extent to which English teachers accept the relatively liberal view toward language held by their own professional organization, and the significance of such acceptance to their judgments of the appropriateness of particular expressions.

Because responses to Part B indicate that the context in which an item appears has a significant effect upon judgments concerning the level of usage at which it is most appropriate, then the study does lend support to the type of presentation of information characteristic of such reference works as Bryant's Current American Usage, and gives further evidence that the normative approach characteristic of many handbooks of usage is largely wasted effort.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS OF THE STUDY

#### Introduction

As stated in the previous chapter, several nonparametric statistical techniques were used to determine whether significant deviations from chance results were present in the findings. In no case was a deviation from results expected by chance considered significant if it was greater than a level of confidence of .05. In each of the following sections, the methods of analysis are presented with references to tables of responses.

#### Relationship of Preparation and Assignment to Opinions

Directions to Part A of the instrument [See Appendix A] asked teachers to indicate whether they had a major or minor in college work in English; whether over half or less than half of their teaching assignment was in English; whether the population of the community in which they teach is less than 10,000, between 10,000 and 30,000 or over 30,000; and whether their teaching experience was under ten years, between ten and twenty years, or over twenty years. Previous studies, as reported in Chapter II of this paper, have indicated that teachers of English who have more than ten years of teaching experience and who live in small towns tend to be most conservative in their expression of opinions concerning acceptable or appropriate usage. Those findings were generally

supported by this study.

For example, Tables I and II show the numbers of English majors and minors classed as liberal or conservative on the basis of their scores on Part C of the instrument. Table I presents information about Group 1, for which items of usage were underlined in Part B. Table II contains similar information for Group 2, for which specific items of usage were not marked.

TABLE I  
FREQUENCIES OF MAJORS AND MINORS HOLDING  
LIBERAL OR CONSERVATIVE VIEWS  
GROUP 1

College Major or Minor	Liberal		Conservative		Total
	Expected	Observed	Expected	Observed	
English Major	107.47	108	37.53	37	145
English Minor	18.53	18	6.47	7	25
Total		126		44	170

TABLE II  
FREQUENCIES OF MAJORS AND MINORS HOLDING  
LIBERAL OR CONSERVATIVE VIEWS  
GROUP 2

College Major or Minor	Liberal		Conservative		Total
	Expected	Observed	Expected	Observed	
English Major	101.86	101	36.14	37	138
English Minor	22.14	23	7.86	7	30
Total		124		44	168

According to the scoring method explained in the preceding chapter, subjects were considered liberal if their scores in Part C, i.e., reactions to statements about usage, were above 60; or conservative if those scores were below 60. A score of 60 indicated no definite

tendency to support either liberal or conservative points of view, and all such responses were omitted from this statistical check. Of the 174 members of Group 1, only four scored 60 on Part C. Four members of the 172 in Group 2 were omitted for the same reason.

Analyses of the relationship between obtained scores and proportions expected by chance yielded a chi-square of .00021 for Group 1 and .0268 for Group 2. Neither figure represents a finding significantly different from chance expectancy. Therefore, one must conclude that for the groups studied, a college major or minor in English had no significant influence upon the opinions these teachers held concerning matters of usage.

Tables III and IV present information concerning teaching assignment and the tendency by members of Group 1 and Group 2 respectively to support liberal or conservative statements about usage. Here again chi-square values of .6503 for Group 1 and .0115 for Group 2 indicate no significant relationship between the magnitude of the teaching assignment in English and a tendency to support either liberal or conservative points of view.

TABLE III  
TEACHING ASSIGNMENT AND LIBERAL  
OR CONSERVATIVE VIEWS  
GROUP 1

Assignment in English	Liberal		Conservative		Total
	Expected	Observed	Expected	Observed	
Over Half	106.83	109	22.7	34	143
Half or Less	17.77	18	6.83	9	27
Total		127		43	170



TABLE IV  
TEACHING ASSIGNMENT AND LIBERAL  
OR CONSERVATIVE VIEW  
GROUP 2

Assignment in English	Liberal		Conservative		Total
	Expected	Observed	Expected	Observed	
Over Half	106.29	106	37.7	38	144
Half or Less	18	18	6.29	6	24
Total		124		44	168

The size of the community in which these persons teach does seem to be significant, however, as earlier studies have indicated. Analyses of the information presented in Tables V and VI yield chi-square values of 8.68 for Group 1 and 9.2 for Group 2. Both values are significant at the .01 level; that is, the probability that they would occur by chance is only one in one hundred. Teachers in towns with a population under 10,000 do seem to take a more conservative position concerning matters of English usage, and teachers in cities of over 30,000 tend to support liberal points of view more often than would be expected from chance distribution of scores.

TABLE V  
SIZE OF COMMUNITY AND LIBERAL  
OR CONSERVATIVE VIEW  
GROUP 1

Community Size	Liberal		Conservative		Total
	Expected	Observed	Expected	Observed	
Under 10,000	49.65	42	17.34	25	67
10,000 to 30,000	42.25	45	14.7	12	57
Over 30,000	34.1	39	12.97	7	46
Total		126		44	170

TABLE VI  
 SIZE OF COMMUNITY AND LIBERAL  
 OR CONSERVATIVE VIEW  
 GROUP 2

Community Size	Liberal		Conservative		Total
	Expected	Observed	Expected	Observed	
Under 10,000	48.7	40	17.88	26	66
10,000 to 30,000	38.38	42	13.6	10	52
Over 30,000	36.9	42	13.09	8	50
Total		124		44	168

Analysis of the relationship between teaching experience and opinions about usage yielded different results for the two groups. The information presented in Tables VII and VIII, when analyzed, gave chi-square values of .4505 for Group 1 and 10.5 for Group 2. The first value does not deviate significantly from chance expectancy. However, the value of 10.5 for Group 2 is significant at the .01 level. This result for Group 2 is consistent with the findings of earlier studies: fewer teachers with under ten years experience were found to support a conservative view than would be expected by chance, and more teachers with over twenty years of experience agreed with conservative views.

TABLE VII  
 TEACHING EXPERIENCE AND LIBERAL  
 OR CONSERVATIVE VIEW  
 GROUP 1

Teaching Experience	Liberal		Conservative		Total
	Expected	Observed	Expected	Observed	
Under Ten Years	46.7	47	16.3	16	63
Ten to Twenty Years	46.7	48	16.3	15	63
Over Twenty Years	32.6	31	11.39	13	44
Total		126		44	170

TABLE VIII.  
TEACHING EXPERIENCE AND LIBERAL  
OR CONSERVATIVE VIEW  
GROUP 2

Teaching Experience	Liberal		Conservative		Total
	Expected	Observed	Expected	Observed	
Under Ten Years	50.93	60	18.07	9	69
Ten to Twenty Years	45	40	15.98	21	61
Over Twenty Years	28.04	24	9.95	14	38
Total		124		44	168

Therefore, it appears that Oklahoma teachers of language arts are in general quite similar to their colleagues throughout the nation. As studies on the national level have indicated, English teachers with over twenty years of experience and with teaching assignments in small towns tend to be conservative in their views, whereas their younger colleagues in the cities are more liberal.

#### Effect of Context on Judgment of Items

In Part B of the instrument, fifteen items which have been considered disputable were presented, each of them in two contexts--one of which was intended to be more formal than the other. Appendix B contains scores for informal and formal contexts made by each subject in Group 1. The Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks Test was used to determine whether the subjects' responses were influenced by the context in which the usage items appeared. Chance dictates that if such influences were present, responses to the items in different contexts would result in equal scores. Application of this method of analysis to the data yields a z-score of -3.07 for Group 1. Reference to a table of normal curve areas reveals that the probability that this value will

occur by chance is .0011; i.e., a z-score of -3.07 could occur by chance less than one time in one thousand. It is evident, therefore, that these teachers do tend to rank items of usage higher when they are presented in a relatively formal context. Such a result is especially significant in view of the fact that items were clearly marked, and the subjects could easily compare their own responses to points of usage as they appeared in different sentences.

Scores for Part B, Group 2, are given in Appendix C. Usage items in Part B of the instrument for this group were not marked. Consequently, the subjects would not be expected to recognize the presence of disputable items of usage hidden in each sentence, and an even greater difference between rankings of items in different contexts would be expected to occur if such a difference appeared in the analysis of data for Group 1. That expectation was borne out. Use of the Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks Test in this case yielded a z-score of -7.39, a score which indicates that such a result would be expected to occur by chance only in extremely rare circumstances. Consequently, these results show that when particular disputable expressions are not specifically marked, teachers tend to rate the sentences in which they appear in terms of the wording of the entire sentence.

#### Relationship Between Measurements of Opinion and Judgments of Usage Items

Total scores of each subject for Part B of the instrument and scores for Part C are presented in Appendix D for Group 1 and Appendix E for Group 2. The Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient was used to determine whether or not a significant relationship existed between responses to parts B and C, i.e., between tendency toward acceptance of a

liberal or conservative point of view about usage as indicated by Part C of the instrument and actual rankings of usage items in Part B. The correlation for Group 1 was  $r_s = .235$ ; for Group 2  $r_s = .28$ . In both cases the values were so low as to indicate no significant relationship between the two. In other words, these values indicate that rankings of particular items of usage by the subjects who participated in this study were not determined by the attitudes these teachers felt toward statements about usage which are either conservative or liberal in tone.

It should be noted that this analysis did not include a correction for ties; however, Siegel notes that there is a "relatively insignificant effect of ties upon the value of the Spearman rank correlation," but that when they do occur, "the effect of ties is to inflate the value of  $r_s$ ."<sup>83</sup> Therefore, because the values discovered in this analysis were very low, the author felt no need to make a correction for ties.

#### Judgments of Particular Items of Usage

Results of the Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks Test presented earlier in this chapter indicated that the subjects definitely were influenced by the context in their ranking of the items of usage taken as a whole. Percentages of responses to each item are presented below. The items are numbered as they appear on the instrument but have been rearranged so that relatively informal and relatively formal contexts for particular usage problems appear in pairs. The more formal context appears second in each pair.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup>Ibid., p. 210.

<sup>84</sup>The total of percentages for several items is either slightly above or slightly below one-hundred percent. Such deviations are negligible and resulted from rounding to the nearest value during computation.

Of the fifteen items included in this part of the study, the greatest number were ranked as informal spoken by a majority of the subjects. The following seven items were considered informal spoken usage by most of the subjects in both groups; however, a slight change toward higher rankings can be noted for most of those in Group 1, whereas ranks in Group 2 were more evenly distributed throughout the range of rankings when the context was more formal in pairs numbered 4.--9. and 7.--23.

	Formal Written Spoken	Formal Spoken	Informal Written Spoken	Informal Spoken	Illiterate or Uncultivated
1. I read in the paper <u>where</u> the accident took three lives.					
Group 1	2%	1%	5%	59%	34%
Group 2	1	3	8	60	29
8. Professor Ridley read the passage <u>where</u> the Duc de Montfort calls down the wrath of God upon the peasants.					
Group 1	7	6	9	51	26
Group 2	8	6	16	48	22
4. She <u>will probably</u> spend the evening curled up with a good book.					
Group 1	6	17	19	54	4
Group 2	4	9	20	65	4
9. The President <u>will probably</u> announce his decision at tomorrow's press conference.					
Group 1	9	19	20	49	3
Group 2	25	28	18	29	1
5. The evening of hard study helped <u>some</u> , but not enough.					
Group 1	0	6	16	60	18
Group 2	4	5	16	60	15
30. The emergency tax bill is expected to ease the nation's economic plight <u>some</u> , but only temporarily.					
Group 1	1	3	14	59	24
Group 2	6	11	25	41	18

	Formal		Informal		Illiterate or
	Written Spoken		Written Spoken		Uncultivated
7. Miss Vincent <u>cannot</u> ever <u>seem</u> to find a pencil.					
Group 1	5	6	10	44	36
Group 2	10	4	12	45	30
23. Even the most noted authorities on China <u>cannot</u> <u>seem</u> to predict that country's future.					
Group 1	8	13	18	40	21
Group 2	26	24	22	24	5
11. Richard can swim <u>as well</u> or <u>better than</u> Ernest.					
Group 1	11	10	7	48	24
Group 2	8	11	12	51	18
22. Professor Hildebrand's theory of wave length describes sound phenomena <u>as well</u> or <u>better than</u> any other.					
Group 1	9	6	12	47	26
Group 2	11	18	11	44	18
12. <u>Most anybody</u> would be confused by her directions.					
Group 1	1	4	2	49	44
Group 2	0	1	8	53	38
3. Economists were advised that <u>most any</u> proposed solution to such a problem would be doomed to failure.					
Group 1	2	4	8	48	39
Group 2	12	10	18	38	23
15. Sally tries to dress <u>like</u> they do in the fashion ads.					
Group 1	1	5	7	60	27
Group 2	1	1	9	56	33
29. Unable to discover any rules to guide him on this occasion, Stephen decided to behave <u>like</u> his eccentric hosts did.					
Group 1	3	4	11	54	28
Group 2	8	10	21	41	21

The six items listed below were ranked as illiterate or uncultivated in both contexts by both groups. Again, a slight shift upward in rankings can be observed for several items. In pairs 6.--27., either (of more than two), and 14.--10., is when, however, the subjects appear to have held rather tenaciously to their original choice.

	Formal		Informal		Illiterate or
	Written Spoken		Written Spoken		Uncultivated
6. <u>Either</u> of these three routes could be taken.					
Group 1	11	6	6	30	45
Group 2	13	9	11	30	37

27. The students were asked to express judgments concerning <u>either</u> item A, B, C, D, or E on the examination.					
Group 1	5	9	7	37	41
Group 2	11	11	12	31	37

14. John thinks that frustration is <u>when</u> wants are denied.					
Group 1	0	2	5	43	51
Group 2	1	3	11	44	42

10. Oligarchy is <u>when</u> governmental power is in the hands of a few.					
Group 1	2	2	8	35	53
Group 2	2	5	12	41	41

16. He <u>dove</u> almost ten feet into the mill pond.					
Group 1	5	5	2	40	49
Group 2	6	5	8	44	38

28. A magnificent stag trembled for a moment on the promontory, silhouetted against the raging fire, then <u>dove</u> headlong into the lake.					
Group 1	6	4	9	34	47
Group 2	24	3	16	24	33

17. <u>Neither</u> of their excuses <u>are</u> really good.					
Group 1	1	2	1	27	70
Group 2	3	2	6	31	58



	Formal		Informal		Illiterate or
	Written	Spoken	Written	Spoken	Uncultivated

13. Although Ptolemaic and Druvengian conceptions of the universe were once considered accurate, neither of those theories are in agreement with the facts of modern astronomy.

Group 1	5	3	5	24	64
Group 2	30	9	6	19	38

18. Mrs. Brown asked John and myself to bring the tools.

Group 1	1	2	2	23	72
Group 2	1	1	2	26	70

24. The mayor extends his deepest gratitude to the council and yourselves for the fine work you have done.

Group 1	1	4	4	25	67
Group 2	2	6	6	36	50

26. Edward is tall, but Frank is taller than him.

Group 1	0	2	1	27	71
Group 2	1	0	2	24	73

21. Abigail knew that she was greatly inferior to her older sisters in beauty and grace, but she was much more adept than them in household skills.

Group 1	1	1	2	22	75
Group 2	2	5	6	26	61

In the last pair given above an unexpected difference between the two groups occurred. A greater number of subjects in Group 1 considered than him to be uncultivated or illiterate when the item appeared in a more formal context. Subjects in Group 2, on the other hand, tended to rank the item higher when it appeared in more formal context. Also, a large number of subjects in Group 2 ranked neither are, items 17.--13., as formal written English when it appeared in formal context even though the majority of subjects still considered it to be most appropriate to uncultivated or illiterate use of the language.

Although most subjects in both groups ranked due to and have proven as informal spoken English, a sizable number of subjects in Group 2 ranked the items as formal written English when they appeared in formal context.

	Formal		Informal		Illiterate or
	Written Spoken		Written Spoken		Uncultivated
19. Johnson and Brown were late <u>due to</u> the airline strike.					
Group 1	5	5	14	58	17
Group 2	2	4	22	52	20
2. <u>Due to</u> a sudden epidemic of cholera in the southern part of the island, Her Majesty decided to postpone her visit indefinitely.					
Group 1	11	8	26	44	11
Group 2	28	8	24	27	13

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25. Marvin's ideas <u>have</u> been <u>proven</u> to be sound.					
Group 1	16	13	15	35	21
Group 2	16	13	19	33	19
20. Freud's theories concerning maturation <u>have proven</u> most accurate in cultures similar to his own.					
Group 1	19	15	13	31	22
Group 2	28	22	17	22	12

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#### Summary of Findings

Certain factors concerning teaching assignment and preparation for teaching were examined in this study. It was found that, for the group studied, those who held the most conservative views were persons with over twenty years experience who teach in relatively small communities. The most liberal members of the group studied were those who had taught less than ten years and who are teaching at present in cities with populations of over 30,000. Whether these teachers currently held a major or minor teaching assignment in English or had taken English as a major

or minor field of study in their college preparation for teaching seems to have had no significant influence upon how they feel about usage standards or whether they accept a liberal approach to language in teaching.

As might be expected, these teachers' responses to the study indicated no meaningful relationship between opinions about usage standards and their actual judgments about particular items of usage; however, such a result is understandable in view of the very definite tendency by these teachers to rank items differently when they appear in different contexts. For certain items, the difference in judgments is striking. For example, fifty-eight percent of the members of Group 2, individuals who marked questionnaires in which usage items were not underlined, ranked neither are as uncultivated or illiterate, and thirty-one percent ranked it as informal spoken English when it appeared in a rather informal sentence. When the item was placed in a more formal sentence, however, only thirty-eight percent ranked it illiterate or uncultivated. Thirty percent of the subjects, as opposed to three percent when the item appeared in an informal sentence, ranked it formal written English. Members of this group were asked to rank the entire sentence, of course; nevertheless, the item was present in both contexts, and it is one which handbooks of English usage have traditionally frowned upon.

## CHAPTER V

### INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

#### Conclusions and Implications

The tendency for experienced teachers in small communities to be much more conservative than their less experienced colleagues in the cities is widespread, and is probably a phenomenon which will remain rather stable. On the other hand, certain definite conclusions can be made about the information reported in the last chapter, and certain implications can be drawn from them.

Analysis of the data for Part B shows that these teachers did change their judgments about the appropriateness of particular expressions in English usage, even when those items were clearly marked so that they could make comparisons of their own responses to the same item in different contexts. An obvious conclusion to be drawn from this finding is that rigid adherence to handbook rules and insistence upon correctness apart from the practical problems to be encountered in speech and writing must be avoided. This finding does not, of course, either challenge, or firmly support a conservative or a liberal point of view on matters of language usage. However, it does make clear that, whether tending toward liberality or conservatism as defined for the purposes of this study, the teacher must maintain flexibility in judgments about usage.

Such flexibility is especially important in the classroom where

often in the past teachers have felt it their duty to correct "errors" in students' speech whenever they appeared. As this study has indicated, such "errors" may be disputable expressions not considered wrong by others of equal experience and authority to judge. In evaluating written expression, of course, the teacher must be sure that she and her students agree on the purposes of the assignment and the language appropriate to it; otherwise, the teacher may waste valuable time in a search for errors which her students cannot really understand.

Flexibility must be maintained in the teacher's explanation of what authorities for the English language are for and how they should be used. Furthermore, although this finding does in no way challenge the teacher's right, or rather her responsibility to establish authority for language standards, it does make clear that she must demonstrate the range of acceptability for a particular expression to be found in the best of reference works. She must know and be able to explain to her students how to use authoritative references on language effectively. Because these teachers changed their rankings of particular expressions when they appeared in different contexts, this study does lend support to the type of reference mentioned earlier in which the facts about usage are given and the acceptable variations, insofar as they can be determined, are presented, but in which the reader is given the responsibility of choosing for himself. Such works describe the range of acceptability. They can, of course, present only limited examples of use in various contexts.

The implications for training future teachers should be clear. First of all, young teachers should be made aware that controversy about usage does exist, and they must be made aware that the weight of

responsibility in such matters rests on them. They must become aware that as teachers of English, they can best serve as guides in an area in which no absolute authorities, accepted by all, exist. In view of the findings of the study, it should especially be noted that standards can be made to vary, even by teachers of English, who are, perhaps, more greatly concerned about the problem than anyone else is. If teachers, even when they find particular items of usage clearly marked, can still be influenced to change their judgments, it must certainly be assumed that they make unconscious variations of the same sort in the business of daily living, both inside and outside the classroom. If teachers' judgments shift, how can one expect students to abide by hard and fast rules?

Just as a teacher must choose among various possible ways of expressing herself, the student must be taught the possibilities for choice and the need for learning when a particular choice is most appropriate so that as he matures he will develop skill in searching out authoritative references which can lend support to his own judgments.

This study does lend support to the position that there is a need for freedom--not from reasonable standards of established usage accepted by the educated majority, but from the tyranny of rules dissociated from the living problems of speech and writing. For example, a teacher should check her impulse to correct a student's use of "like" as a conjunction until she has determined its appropriateness to the type of speech or writing he is using at the moment.

This study revealed no significant correlation between teachers' judgments of usage items and their support of a conservative or liberal point of view, nor should such a correlation necessarily be expected.

Even this lack of correlation has implications for the training of English teachers, however. Here again, flexibility, not point of view of the types discussed before, is important. This lack of correlation indicates that the point of view these teachers are conscious of supporting has no apparent bearing upon how they judge matters of usage. The teacher in training should not be urged to accept a certain point of view, to which she may merely give lip-service; rather, she should be encouraged to be flexible in her own approach to language study in the classroom, and she should be made aware of her responsibility for making choices when usage problems appear.

#### Suggestions for Future Study

Research of the nature reported in this study is wasted unless it can be used in the improvement of teaching methods in the language arts and in revision of training programs to produce more effective teachers. However, further research is needed.

First, a study of the relationship between attitudes concerning usage and attitudes concerning approaches to teaching in all areas of the language arts should be made. In addition to such a study, the relationship between attitudes about language arts teaching and actual classroom practices should receive special attention. Perhaps most important of all, research should be done to determine the relationship between such attitudes and measures of teachers' effectiveness.

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APPENDIX A

OPINIONS CONCERNING ENGLISH USAGE

## OPINIONS CONCERNING ENGLISH USAGE

## PART A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

DIRECTIONS: Please check the blank space to the left of each item which best describes your professional background or present situation.

A. College Work in English

       major in English  
       minor in English

B. Teaching Assignment

       over half of assignment in English  
       half or less in teaching English

C. Population of Community  
in Which You Teach

       less than 10,000  
       10,000 to 30,000  
       over 30,000

D. Teaching Experience in English

       under 10 years  
       10 to 20 years  
       over 20 years

## PART B

DIRECTIONS: Check the blank space at the left of each entry which in your judgment indicates the variety or level of usage at which each underlined item is most appropriate. Please indicate your judgments according to the following scale:

- 5 Formal written English  
 4 Formal spoken English  
 3 Informal written English  
 2 Informal spoken English  
 1 Uncultivated or illiterate English

5    4    3    2    1

1. I read in the paper where the accident took three lives.
2. Due to a sudden epidemic of cholera in the southern part of the island, Her Majesty decided to postpone her visit indefinitely.
3. Economists were advised that most any proposed solution to such a problem would be doomed to failure.
4. She will probably spend the evening curled up with a good book.
5. The evening of hard study helped some, but not enough.
6. Either of these three routes could be taken.
7. Miss Vincent cannot ever seem to find a pencil.
- 5    4    3    2    1

- 5 Formal written English
- 4 Formal spoken English
- 3 Informal written English
- 2 Informal spoken English
- 1 Uncultivated or illiterate English

5    4    3    2    1

- \_\_\_ 8. Professor Ridley read the passage where the Duc de Montfort calls down the wrath of God upon the peasants.
- \_\_\_ 9. The President will probably announce his decision at tomorrow's press conference.
- \_\_\_ 10. Oligarchy is when governmental power is in the hands of a few.
- \_\_\_ 11. Richard can swim as well or better than Ernest.
- \_\_\_ 12. Most anybody would be confused by her directions.
- \_\_\_ 13. Although Ptolemaic and Druvengian conceptions of the universe were once considered accurate, neither of those theories are in agreement with the facts of modern astronomy.
- \_\_\_ 14. John thinks that frustration is when wants are denied.
- 5    4    3    2    1
- \_\_\_ 15. Sally tries to dress like they do in the fashion ads.
- \_\_\_ 16. He dove almost ten feet into the mill pond.
- \_\_\_ 17. Neither of their excuses are really good.
- \_\_\_ 18. Mrs. Brown asked John and myself to bring the tools.
- \_\_\_ 19. Johnson and Brown were late due to the airline strike.
- \_\_\_ 20. Freud's theories concerning maturation have proven most accurate in cultures similar to his own.
- \_\_\_ 21. Abigail knew that she was greatly inferior to her older sisters in beauty and grace, but she was more adept than them in household skills.
- \_\_\_ 22. Professor Hildebrand's theory of wave length describes sound phenomena as well or better than any other.
- \_\_\_ 23. Even the most noted authorities on China cannot seem to predict that country's future.

5    4    3    2    1

- 5 Formal written English  
 4 Formal Spoken English  
 3 Informal written English  
 2 Informal spoken English  
 1 Uncultivated or illiterate English

5 4 3 2 1

- \_\_\_\_ 24. The mayor extends his deepest gratitude to the council and yourselves for the fine work you have done.
- \_\_\_\_ 25. Marvin's ideas have been proven to be sound.
- \_\_\_\_ 26. Edward is tall, but Frank is taller than him.
- \_\_\_\_ 27. The students were asked to express judgments concerning either item A,B,C,D, or E on the examination.
- \_\_\_\_ 28. A magnificent stag trembled for a moment on the promontory, silhouetted against the raging fire, then dove headlong into the lake.
- \_\_\_\_ 29. Unable to discover any rules to guide him on this occasion, Stephen decided to behave like his eccentric hosts did.
- \_\_\_\_ 30. The emergency tax bill is expected to ease the nation's economic plight some, but only temporarily.

5 4 3 2 1

### PART C

DIRECTIONS: The following statements are concerned with attitudes about standards for current English usage. Please check the blank to the left of each item which corresponds most closely with your opinion according to the following scale:

- SA I strongly agree with this statement.  
 A I agree with this statement.  
 U I am undecided about this point.  
 D I disagree with this statement.  
 SD I strongly disagree with this statement.

SA A U D SD

- \_\_\_\_ 31. The view that general usage establishes standards of correctness gives evidence of a decay of values in our culture.
- \_\_\_\_ 32. The English teacher should drill her students on the fine points of correct usage.
- \_\_\_\_ 33. A good English teacher refuses to sanction errors in usage even if they are condoned by published authorities.



- SA I strongly agree with this statement.  
 A I agree with this statement.  
 U I am undecided about this point.  
 D I disagree with this statement.  
 SD I strongly disagree with this statement.

SA    A    U    D    SD

- \_\_\_\_ 34. The student's natural inclinations in matters of  
usage are misleading and should be replaced by  
standards we know to be correct.
- \_\_\_\_ 35. Standards of correctness should be flexible  
rather than arbitrary.
- \_\_\_\_ 36. Good usage is that which is comfortable to both  
speaker and listener.
- \_\_\_\_ 37. The language usage of the great majority of  
native American speakers is substandard.
- \_\_\_\_ 38. The teacher should present the standard English  
of educated persons as a cultivated dialect  
advantageous to acquire.
- \_\_\_\_ 39. The student who has mastered his language is  
skilled in adapting his usage to the occasion.

SA    A    U    D    SD

- \_\_\_\_ 40. Rejection of traditional standards of usage  
would convert our language into a confusion of  
expressions.
- \_\_\_\_ 41. Certain traditionally held concepts of correct-  
ness are based on the structure of Latin and  
have little relevance to English.
- \_\_\_\_ 42. Students must be given a single objective stan-  
dard for good usage.
- \_\_\_\_ 43. Current American usage indicates a generally low  
level of speech and writing in this country.
- \_\_\_\_ 44. Standards of correctness in the classroom should  
be those followed by the majority of educated  
people.
- \_\_\_\_ 45. Language usage changes continually to meet  
changing needs.
- \_\_\_\_ 46. The tendency to use grammatically inaccurate  
expressions indicates a deterioration in our  
language.

SA    A    U    D    SD

SA I strongly agree with this statement.  
 A I agree with this statement.  
 U I am undecided about this statement.  
 D I disagree with this statement.  
 SD I strongly disagree with this statement.

SA    A    U    D    SD

\_\_\_\_ 47. Language which is grammatically correct is not  
 necessarily good usage in all social situations.

\_\_\_\_ 48. Good usage is based upon long established  
 standards.

\_\_\_\_ 49. Teachers should accept usage which reputable  
 published information tends to support.

\_\_\_\_ 50. The basis for correctness in language is social  
 acceptance.

SA    A    U    D    SD

COMMENTS:

APPENDIX B

SCORES ON USAGE IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS  
GROUP 1

SCORES ON USAGE IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS  
GROUP 1

Sub- ject	Context		Sub- ject	Context		Sub- ject	Context	
	Informal	Formal		Informal	Formal		Informal	Formal
1	43	40	48	43	47	95	25	27
2	41	41	49	27	29	96	43	43
3	39	41	50	31	41	97	50	48
4	39	39	51	21	23	98	41	41
5	35	41	52	39	47	99	33	35
6	35	37	53	39	39	100	35	32
7	29	37	54	35	39	101	43	51
8	39	37	55	45	39	102	33	31
9	25	19	56	47	49	103	37	39
10	39	40	57	35	39	104	32	39
11	51	47	58	31	23	105	57	57
12	23	19	59	33	33	106	43	43
13	21	25	60	15	25	107	37	39
14	29	27	61	39	37	108	33	33
15	35	39	62	43	43	109	41	47
16	37	39	63	29	53	110	27	29
17	35	41	64	33	31	111	28	43
18	31	29	65	33	31	112	49	55
19	46	47	66	31	35	113	28	43
20	29	31	67	39	41	114	28	29
21	35	31	68	25	27	115	43	47
22	43	45	69	33	49	116	25	29
23	25	37	70	29	21	117	23	23
24	19	17	71	29	31	118	43	41
25	51	59	72	39	45	119	37	39
26	49	55	73	23	23	120	31	31
27	33	33	74	31	33	121	31	31
28	33	35	75	47	51	122	33	43
29	41	45	76	35	33	123	71	71
30	35	41	77	37	37	124	35	45
31	49	51	78	33	27	125	37	45
32	30	27	79	35	35	126	53	53
33	27	27	80	31	23	127	33	37
34	31	37	81	29	29	128	39	47
35	38	49	82	29	31	129	45	47
36	31	31	83	31	29	130	33	33
37	31	35	84	41	43	131	49	45
38	37	41	85	23	21	132	30	58
39	45	47	86	45	45	133	47	39
40	31	29	87	45	47	134	39	37
41	49	42	88	25	27	135	35	37
42	35	33	89	34	34	136	29	31
43	41	43	90	35	37	137	37	33
44	31	35	91	43	51	138	34	35
45	29	38	92	45	45	139	49	47
46	45	45	93	35	35	140	41	43
47	30	34	94	27	27	141	29	23

## APPENDIX B (Continued)

Sub- ject	Context		Sub- ject	Context		Sub- ject	Context	
	Informal	Formal		Informal	Formal		Informal	Formal
142	53	45	153	51	49	164	26	31
143	37	37	154	52	55	165	47	43
144	33	31	155	49	49	166	39	35
145	43	39	156	33	33	167	37	43
146	29	27	157	31	45	168	17	16
147	39	45	158	25	31	169	25	29
148	38	39	159	51	55	170	51	41
149	25	21	160	37	41	171	29	41
150	33	31	161	39	32	172	43	45
151	29	21	162	45	49	173	49	51
152	41	57	163	51	53	174	35	31

APPENDIX C

SCORES ON USAGE IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS  
GROUP 2

SCORES ON USAGE IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS  
GROUP 2

Sub- ject	Context		Sub- ject	Context		Sub- ject	Context	
	Informal	Formal		Informal	Formal		Informal	Formal
175	41	45	222	45	47	269	43	44
176	43	47	223	37	59	270	31	49
177	37	49	224	37	39	271	35	47
178	43	45	225	39	53	272	49	53
179	43	53	226	47	67	273	39	45
180	38	37	227	31	35	274	15	21
181	45	57	228	43	49	275	35	41
182	33	45	229	33	37	276	33	41
183	37	55	230	29	33	277	37	49
184	37	41	231	37	49	278	49	63
185	39	63	232	50	51	279	39	39
186	29	49	233	33	43	280	23	43
187	47	57	234	41	51	281	25	31
188	49	59	235	35	51	282	23	23
189	35	57	236	17	21	283	37	47
190	36	35	237	39	45	284	41	53
191	49	50	238	49	55	285	25	39
192	27	29	239	29	39	286	25	33
193	37	47	240	31	41	287	39	37
194	45	43	241	27	25	288	47	53
195	33	37	242	29	33	289	47	75
196	27	39	243	39	63	290	35	41
197	37	47	244	28	35	291	41	41
198	35	41	245	53	57	292	39	47
199	41	65	246	25	25	293	33	49
200	39	47	247	45	73	294	35	39
201	37	57	248	39	49	295	45	53
202	49	53	249	35	51	296	45	53
203	29	39	250	33	41	297	31	35
204	51	45	251	37	39	298	21	47
205	37	45	252	45	41	299	51	63
206	39	49	253	15	15	300	25	35
207	25	51	254	31	39	301	45	51
208	43	53	255	47	59	302	41	65
209	30	31	256	45	41	303	51	55
210	29	31	257	37	41	304	33	37
211	37	45	258	27	33	305	25	39
212	33	43	259	47	53	306	25	31
213	23	33	260	33	65	307	39	43
214	25	29	261	35	37	308	47	49
215	35	45	262	45	65	309	43	51
216	51	55	263	45	49	310	41	47
217	43	51	264	41	59	311	37	49
218	25	27	265	33	35	312	37	55
219	30	43	266	38	33	313	39	45
220	37	33	267	33	43	314	55	52
221	36	53	268	47	57	315	53	53

## APPENDIX C (Continued)

Sub- ject	Context		Sub- ject	Context		Sub- ject	Context	
	Informal	Formal		Informal	Formal		Informal	Formal
316	38	59	327	43	45	338	37	45
317	49	47	328	43	47	339	25	29
318	33	35	329	39	49	340	31	31
319	41	50	330	45	49	341	49	53
320	55	57	331	31	31	342	49	57
321	37	49	332	35	49	343	35	31
322	41	39	333	40	53	344	29	35
323	51	67	334	33	33	345	41	37
324	36	51	335	49	49	346	37	37
325	29	29	336	28	33			
326	35	36	337	43	41			



APPENDIX D

TOTAL SCORES ON USAGE AND OPINIONS  
GROUP 1

TOTAL SCORES ON USAGE AND OPINIONS  
GROUP 1

Sub- ject	Usage Opinions		Sub- ject	Usage Opinions		Sub- ject	Usage Opinions	
1	83	54	43	84	75	85	44	52
2	82	59	44	66	70	86	90	78
3	80	66	45	67	66	87	92	69
4	78	66	46	90	51	88	52	62
5	76	69	47	64	77	89	68	69
6	72	60	48	90	59	90	72	71
7	66	57	49	56	68	91	94	74
8	76	77	50	72	80	92	90	67
9	44	50	51	44	68	93	70	65
10	79	63	52	86	82	94	56	55
11	98	78	53	78	78	95	52	66
12	42	52	54	74	63	96	86	84
13	46	61	55	84	77	97	98	66
14	56	67	56	96	49	98	82	99
15	74	58	57	74	73	99	68	51
16	76	60	58	54	66	100	67	52
17	76	74	59	66	63	101	94	51
18	60	73	60	40	60	102	64	69
19	93	83	61	76	52	103	76	56
20	60	72	62	86	85	104	71	70
21	66	77	63	82	50	105	114	83
22	88	80	64	76	84	106	86	73
23	62	77	65	64	62	107	76	77
24	36	65	66	66	52	108	66	89
25	110	65	67	80	80	109	88	64
26	104	59	68	52	52	110	56	54
27	66	70	69	82	78	111	71	61
28	68	62	70	50	62	112	104	80
29	86	78	71	60	81	113	71	55
30	76	71	72	84	81	114	57	83
31	100	86	73	46	58	115	90	71
32	57	77	74	64	56	116	54	66
33	54	73	75	98	73	117	46	57
34	68	58	76	68	71	118	84	67
35	87	74	77	74	74	119	76	61
36	62	57	78	60	96	120	62	60
37	66	62	79	70	87	121	62	75
38	78	77	80	54	85	122	76	67
39	92	52	81	58	54	123	76	72
40	60	59	82	60	74	124	80	61
41	91	85	83	60	68	125	82	87
42	68	77	84	84	82	126	106	85

## APPENDIX D. (Continued)

Sub- ject	Usage Opinions		Sub- ject	Usage Opinions		Sub- ject	Usage Opinions	
127	70	72	143	74	76	159	106	75
128	86	81	144	64	78	160	78	74
129	92	91	145	56	55	162	94	50
130	66	74	146	56	55	162	94	50
131	94	59	147	84	77	163	104	73
132	88	63	148	77	80	164	57	68
133	86	77	149	46	50	165	90	62
134	76	76	150	64	72	166	74	56
135	72	65	151	60	48	167	80	57
136	60	65	152	98	58	168	33	51
137	70	67	153	100	59	169	54	55
138	69	63	154	107	84	170	92	61
139	96	68	155	98	62	k71	70	72
140	84	66	156	66	64	172	88	80
141	52	63	157	76	61	173	100	82
142	98	53	158	56	80	174	66	57

APPENDIX E

TOTAL SCORES ON USAGE AND OPINIONS  
GROUP 2

TOTAL SCORES ON USAGE AND OPINIONS  
GROUP 2

Sub- ject	Usage	Opinions	Sub- ject	Usage	Opinions	Sub- ject	Usage	Opinions
175	86	79	221	89	64	267	76	55
176	90	59	222	92	60	268	104	77
177	86	60	223	96	86	269	87	52
178	88	79	224	76	51	270	80	57
179	96	73	225	92	89	271	82	59
180	75	73	226	114	80	272	102	75
181	102	76	227	66	77	273	84	92
182	78	59	228	92	83	274	36	48
183	92	77	229	70	55	275	76	71
184	78	63	230	62	68	276	74	69
185	102	68	231	86	79	277	86	83
186	78	75	232	101	81	278	112	79
187	104	53	233	65	69	279	78	55
188	108	79	234	92	51	280	66	70
189	92	77	235	86	57	281	56	69
190	71	76	236	38	72	282	46	74
191	99	67	237	84	71	283	84	81
192	56	55	238	104	88	284	94	71
193	84	78	239	68	50	285	64	49
194	88	91	240	72	54	286	58	71
195	70	76	241	52	53	287	76	72
196	66	75	242	62	71	288	100	69
197	84	67	243	102	84	289	122	67
198	76	62	244	63	69	290	76	75
199	106	78	245	110	53	291	82	66
200	86	61	246	50	64	292	86	57
201	94	59	247	118	68	293	82	76
202	102	72	248	88	80	294	74	47
203	68	85	249	86	55	295	98	69
204	96	68	250	74	70	296	98	78
205	82	65	251	76	79	297	66	68
206	88	72	252	86	90	298	68	62
207	76	66	253	30	65	299	114	76
208	96	66	254	70	55	300	60	81
209	61	82	255	106	68	301	96	72
210	60	48	256	86	51	302	106	53
211	82	84	257	78	61	303	106	59
212	76	56	258	60	75	304	70	75
213	56	53	259	100	65	305	64	70
214	54	71	260	98	72	306	56	66
215	80	78	261	72	72	307	82	52
216	106	84	262	110	77	308	86	61
217	94	71	263	94	78	309	94	52
218	52	61	264	100	87	310	88	66
219	73	60	265	68	76	311	86	73
220	70	53	266	71	75	312	92	77

## APPENDIX E (Continued)

Sub- ject	Usage	Opinion	Sub- ject	Usage	Opinion	Sub- ject	Usage	Opinion
313	82	69	324	87	54	335	98	78
314	107	63	325	58	51	336	61	82
315	106	81	326	71	57	337	84	60
316	97	77	327	88	84	338	82	73
317	96	85	328	90	85	339	54	53
318	68	65	329	88	59	340	62	57
319	91	74	330	94	54	341	101	82
320	112	77	331	62	62	342	106	57
321	86	67	332	84	69	343	66	59
322	80	61	333	93	56	344	64	67
323	118	72	334	66	65	345	78	62
						346	74	59

VITA

Loren Ferris McKeown

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: A SURVEY OF OPINIONS ABOUT ENGLISH USAGE HELD BY SECONDARY  
LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHERS

Major Field: Higher Education

Biographical:

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